Karen Powell

The Surgeon's Stories.

By Z. TOPELIUS.

THE

SURGEON'S STORIES.

BY

Z. TOPELIUS,

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF FINLAND.

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THE SURGEON'S STORIES.

TIMES OF BATTLE AND OF REST

BY

Z. TOPELIUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL SWEDISH.

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The Surgeon's Stories.

SECOND CYCLE:

TIMES OF BATTLE AND OF REST

Part I. —A Rebel Against Himself.
Part II. —The Witch.
Part III.—Majniemi Castle.

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TIMES OF BATTLE AND OF REST.

PART I.—A REBEL AGAINST HIMSELF.

INTERLUDE.

SPRING had passed, and summer too, and the nights of September began to grow darker and darker. Again the fresh flickering fires commenced to crackle in the great open fire-places of the old grandmother's house; and the Surgeon, whose advancing years rendered him more sensitive to the cold, piled plenty of fuel upon the fire up in his garret-chamber. Anne Sophie had during the summer become betrothed, and spent most of her time at her loom, in the pleasant task of preparing her outfit; for it yet lacked more than a year of the wedding-day. The days had passed as rapidly as the active shuttle flew to and fro between the threads of the warp, and almost as monotonously. The round white arm that followed the course of the shuttle had grown a little thinner; and this the short linen sleeve did not take the trouble to conceal. But within the young bosom which rose and fell beneath the checkered homespun cotton neckerchief, beat a heart as fresh and good, as warm and faithful, as ever swelled the breast of a girl of nineteen, when hope weaves its roses in the blue web of the future.

"Well, well," said the old grandmother, when she occasionally peeped into the weaving-room, and with

a critical eye examined the fineness of the web, "be moderate, dear child! there is plenty of time; take care that you do not weave yourself into consumption! Better short table-cloths and long health. I think Charles Frederick would rather see his girl's cheeks red than his table so snowy-white. That is enough for to-day."

"But, grandmother, how do you expect me to cover the table at the wedding-supper if the web is not finished?"

"Nonsense, dear child. In my bureau, up-stairs in the linen closet, are two dozen beautiful table-cloths of the finest Stockholm make. So now let us go and pick over the gooseberries."

One afternoon in September, when Anne Sophie had patiently withstood a shower of her grandmother's customary admonitions, she said to her: "I have a proposition to make to you; we have such clean work to-day—you are going to string beans, I to pick over the whortleberries, and the children will have to amuse themselves shelling peas. It seems to me that we might all go up to the Surgeon's room and ask him to continue his stories, which he left off late last Spring. There was something at the end that promised more to come, and I confess that I am very curious to know what followed. What do you think, grandmother?"

"But what will Bäck say? I fancy he would stare, if we all were to march up into his garret-chamber with our traps—baskets and dishes and knives and scissors and chopping-board. No, Anne, the old man would be angry; he has his peculiarities, and likes to be left in peace."

"I will take that responsibility!" exclaimed Anne Sophie merrily; and before her grandmother could make any objections, the young weaver, happy as a child, had run up the winding garret-stair and assailed old Bäck in his solitude. She knew her power over the old man, and understood right well how to take him

on his weakest side. She pretended that she absolutely must come to look after her uncle, and to inquire how the canary birds fared. Then she gradually changed to politics and the newspapers, until the old man grew warm; and finally the errand revealed itself, as if by chance, and before half an hour had passed she had the Surgeon's promise that not only herself and the grandmother and the children, but Charles Frederick also, should be admitted to the garret-chamber, together with the necessary equipment of baskets, dishes, etc. It is quite probable that the Surgeon perceived the innocent ruse; but if so, he did not show it. Anne Sophie was the favorite in the garret-chamber as she was in the whole house; and so he patiently accepted his fate, directed old Sarah to bring in more wood for the fire, and hastily stowed away the things he was most careful of—books, compasses, maps, and papers of tobacco, everything likely to fall into the clutches of eager children. And so he resigned himself to his inevitable fate of being besieged in his peaceful castle, where no disturbance save the gnawing of rats ever gained entrance.

Steps and noise were now heard on the stairs, and in came the whole troop, one after another, with the old grandmother at the head, and Charles Frederick as rear-guard. Ere long the whole party, not without ceremony on the part of the old folks, had taken their places, grandmother in the seat of honor in the high-backed leather easy-chair, with the beans and chopping-board before her on the table; Anne Sophie, with her whortleberries directly beside her; the children, with their pea-baskets, on low stools scattered about; and the Surgeon, as host, by the fire-place, in the corner of the old sofa, the bast stuffing of which protruded here and there through the worn leather cover. To make the assemblage complete, the schoolmaster, Magister Svenonius, and the postmaster, Captain Svanholm, presented themselves a little later,—both this time, con-

trary to custom, by special invitation. They were in all ten persons, the largest audience the garret-chamber could hold.

The conversation was not easily set in motion, for old Bäck was evidently somewhat embarrassed by so large a company. But the postmaster soon introduced an unexpected episode in the evening's history. At his first appearance, it was surmised that something of importance had come with the newspapers of the day's mail; and so it proved. It was the first news of the peace of Adrianople (Sept. 14, 1829). Thunder and lightning! Since the famous day of Karstula, when Svanholm lost the fore-finger of his left hand, and since the battle of Navarino, his grey eyes had not been seen to shine with such warlike courage. He was beside himself with rage that such a splendid opportunity for driving the Turks headlong out of Europe had been allowed to slip; he raved against the diplomats of all Europe; he showered his abuse upon England for her foolish jealousy, which had again placed props under the rotten foundations of the Ottoman Porte.

"God forgive me! Have we not been altogether too forbearing toward the Turks? Why did we not take Constantinople, when we only needed to stretch out our hand in order to put St. Sophia Mosque in our pocket? I wish that Fieandt's fellows had been there, and gone on as they did at Karstula! I remember as if it had happened yesterday . . . . "

"Dear brother," interrupted Svenonius, always alert whenever Karstula was mentioned, "'tis as I have said all my life: it is ink which rules the world, and it is ink which now has ruled in Adrianople and has held the bayonets in check, saying 'Stand modestly aside, my children!' The ink—understand it, brother—is in a certain sense the intelligence which says to the brute force, 'Now you shall strike,' and, 'Now you shall humbly stick your cleavers in their scabbard . . . . '"

"Ink here, and ink there!" cried the captain, explod-

ing in passion ; " is the ink intelligence ?—then hang me if it is not an intelligence as black as the devil . . . . "

"Cousin Svanholm!" admonished the old grandmother, mildly, with a glance toward the children; and the captain immediately became silent.

Meanwhile the Surgeon had become a little heated by the political discussion, and began, in his usual quiet manner, to demonstrate how the Turks had for good reasons been let alone for a time, only that it might become more apparent that their house was rotten and would soon tumble of itself.

"For," said the Surgeon, "the Lord has His own purposes in all this matter. He sees that Christianity needs to look upon Islam decaying close beside her, in order to understand thoroughly how no other religion than the true revealed one has within it a germ of eternal life, and is, therefore, able to maintain states and people. If it were not that we saw the Turks so miserable just at our doors, we might say: 'The creed of Mahommed has as many followers as that of Christ; it may be just as good, too.'"

"But, dear cousin Bäck," interrupted grandmother, a little vexed, piling four large bean-pods upon each other to be cut, "we are here now not to learn about the Turks, but about Bertel and Larsson and their descendants. Since there is now—God be praised!—peace in Adrianople, let there be peace in the garret-chamber, too. For my part, I think there are some good things about the Turks: Turkish beans, Turkish shawls, Turkish yarn, for instance . . . . "

"Why not also Turkish canister tobacco?" replied the Surgeon, smiling, and seizing the welcome opportunity to fill his short pipe, whose finely-grained wooden bowl represented a turbaned head.

"Dear, good uncle!" chimed in Anne Sophie, hastening, with no little danger to her fine fingers, to light a stick in the fire-place and hand it to the Surgeon. "I am so very curious to hear what that wonderful ring

accomplished in the world. How was it? All who wore it were to be safe from fire, steel, water, and all kinds of danger, if they committed no perjury? They were to gain all the power and riches of the world, and have no other enemy than themselves? But they were also to be the most dangerous enemies of their own good fortune, through haughtiness, imperiousness, and internal strife, and the curse and blessing should strive together for them?"

"*Rex Regi Rebellis*—wasn't that the inscription?" remarked Svenonius, with a learned air. "For my part, I should prefer to say, *rebellis in regem*; but I know perfectly well it is monk-Latin."

"Yes!" cried Andreas, his mouth filled with dry peas, "and if the ring was worn by three succeeding generations, from that family should arise great men and provosts; but if worn through six succeeding generations, the sons after the fathers, then from that family should arise a pope . . . . "

"Andreas intends to become a minister," answered the Surgeon; "therefore his fancies take such a reverend direction. Through three succeeding generations the ring produces generals and statesmen; through six succeeding generations, princes, kings, emperors . . . "

"Bernadotte and Napoleon! I know already!" exclaimed Anne Sophie, clapping her hands, so that some of the berries fell on the floor. Charles Frederick, with the customary politeness of an accepted lover, hastened to gather them up and—eat them.

"I never said so," replied the Surgeon, calmly. "A family so restless, and threatened by so many dangers, has but little probability of continuing through six generations in possession of a family jewel. Pray remember that Larsson's present family, with its calm contentment and its active industry, has better expectations of a long existence . . . . "

"You say that only to deceive us," continued Anne Sophie, slyly. "Just as if I had not noticed that you

are a little inclined toward 'the people with the fiery dispositions'—the nobility; although you consider yourself rather as belonging to the quiet peasant-folk. Well, Larsson had indeed an amulet also—the axe with oaken handle. I wonder what he will accomplish with that!"

"We shall see!" replied the Surgeon, laconically.

"Be quiet now, children!" said the old grandmother, admonishingly, again selecting four large beanpods. "If Jonathan shoots peas at Anne Sophie, then—mind what I say—it will end as it did last time, when you, my fine fellow, were thrown out of doors. And now, Cousin Bäck, please to commence."

And the Surgeon began his story.

CHAPTER I

FIRST LOVE.

ON a beautiful spring day in the latter part of May, in the year 1656, a lonely horseman might have been seen to force his way along a foot-path in one of the southwestern parishes of Finland. His face was almost entirely hidden by a broad brimmed hat, whose small blue plume, gently waving in the breeze, denoted a man of noble birth, or at least a soldier; a supposition which was confirmed by the richly-embroidered saddle-cloth, the silver stirrups, and the fine yellow hunting-boots with their golden spurs. A short mantle of dark velvet covered the figure of the horseman; but to judge from the suppleness of his movements, and from the evident impatience with which he thrust aside the branches of the birches that hindered his way, under the mantle was a youth who had not yet learned to

meet calmly all the little obstacles in the path of life.

Yet the brush soon became so dense, and the newly budded branches of the birches so annoying, that the horseman was forced to dismount and lead his steed over fallen tree trunks and through the thickets. At length he caught the glimmer of water through the foliage, and soon there appeared the bright surface of a sunlit fiord—one of those caprices of the sea which are so numerous and so charming upon this part of the Finnish coast. It looked more like a chain of lakes than an inlet of the sea; so tortuously did the shores steal along the water's edge, now playfully compressing it within narrow bays and belts, and now, farther on, widening out into the open fiord.

The horseman glanced impatiently and searchingly toward the sea, and his face commenced to brighten. Soon there was heard, around one of the green capes of the fiord, a fresh and clear voice, singing one of those half-joyous, half-sad songs, which, like water-lilies, appear at the strand of the sea, born of wave and solitude, no one can tell when or where. And these words were distinguished:

> "For you have I waited, friend so beloved,
> As the bird for the dawning of day;
> And whenever I gaze in your love-lighted eyes
> My heart becomes happy and gay."

At the sound, the young man took off his hat and waved it several times in the air. In doing this he uncovered a handsome head, in the first bloom of youth, with long bluish-black hair, and two dark flashing eyes with a most charming expression of southern fervor. His fresh lips were shaded by a fine down, scarcely yet noticeable, and his features, which time and years might one day darken too heavily, were now glorified by the brightness of early youth.

From behind the cape there shot, like an arrow, a boat, in which a solitary girl was heard singing:

"My thoughts were of sorrow—my heart madly beating,
Like the dash of the rapid's wild waves . . ."

Then she perceived the horseman on the bank, and immediately the song ceased, but faster were plied the oars, and little drifts of foam curled around the prow of the boat. Light as a waterfowl, the small craft glided over the water, and soon touched the land, where the young knight stood. He had tied his horse to the trunk of a tree, and checked the boat's shock against the beach, pushed it out again, jumped into it, and placed himself on the little seat beside the girl. Now she took one oar, he the other, and they began rowing toward an islet opposite them. Few words were exchanged, but the uneven rowing showed that now one, now the other, was lost in meditation. Thus they occupied half an hour in crossing the same channel over which the girl had so lately flown in but a few minutes. Once the young man stopped rowing entirely; and as the girl's oar continued dipping in the water, the boat moved round in a circle.

"No," laughed the girl, "it will not work that way. You are not used to oars, sir! Why don't you row?"

"Because I am looking at you," answered the young man, innocently, and yet so ardently that his companion's cheeks flushed deeply.

"Give me your oar! I can do better with both."

"Yes, you row and I will take the rudder!"

And with these words, the young man moved to a seat in the stern of the boat, while his flashing eyes were fixed upon the mild features of the girl, which formed a perfect contrast to his own. Now the rowing was more even; the boat almost flew through the water, as the young maiden bent to the oars, scarcely daring to raise her eyes to meet the fiery glances resting upon

her. At last she plucked up courage, and said, a little petulantly:

"When you look at me in that way I can't row. Why do you stare at me so?"

"Because you are so beautiful."

"Do you think so?" answered the girl, with a light toss of her graceful head. "Do you know what mother said, when I was little, and looked in the glass? 'The kitten is pretty, not you,' said she."

"But you have grown much prettier since I saw you. Remember, Greta, it is two whole years since I was last at Majniemi. And I might not now have seen you, if Jane had not whispered into my ear, at the castle, that you would come here to-day, as of old. But you have no pleasant greeting for me; you are naughty, you are ill-humored to-day. You don't love me as you used to do."

"It is very well to speak of me! You, a young nobleman, who have been so long in Stockholm, who have been a page to 'Queen Kerstin' and a retainer of the king—you, to care for a simple girl like me . . . I don't believe it!"

"Stockholm—yes! there are many things to say about that. I will tell you later. But do you know that to-morrow I leave for the war in Poland?"

"No!—what do you say? Are you going to the war? —you, who are so young, only seventeen years? Are you going to kill men, and perhaps be killed yourself? Oh, it is wicked, it is dreadful!" and Greta stopped rowing, and the boat slackened its speed.

"Yes," continued the young man, seriously, "you see we now have war both at home and abroad. Lewenhaupt is marching against the Russians at Wiborg; and it was decided that I should follow him. But my father wrote from Poland that I should join him there; you know that he is an officer on the king's staff. Day after to-morrow, a vessel leaves Åbo for Riga; now I am here to bid farewell to you and to the home of my

childhood. But you repulse me; you hate me; you no longer address me familiarly."

"Address you familiarly, sir! you, a nobleman—a count, whose mother was a princess . . . "

"And whose grandmother was a peasant girl! You do not know our family. It is true, my father has risen to a high position, through the favor of Queen Christina, and through his deeds and booty from the German war and his riches from my mother. It is true that he is proud, very proud; and it is possible that I am as proud as he. But when I look upon you, when I remember how we played together as children, and how dearly we loved each other, and how I, surrounded by the splendor of the court, kept you in my heart as my first, my only, my eternal love, you see, Greta, then I forget that you are only our steward's daughter, and that I am Bernhard, Count of Bertelsköld. I do not care that I shall sometime inherit three entire Finnish parishes for a county, and three towns in Livonia, with the title of German Prince, from my mother;—what do I care for all that, if you do not love me as of old, and call me your own Bernhard again, and promise me, as of old, to be my own little girl, and to love me as long as you live? Now, is it true, that you have forgotten me, while I have been away?"

As the youth uttered these words, his fervid glances and his warm southern ardor made him for the moment so fascinatingly beautiful that poor Greta, instead of replying, began to row again with all her might, the effect of which was that the next moment the boat struck violently against the beach, the prow being lifted so high that water poured in over the stern. The girl hastened to extend her hand to her companion, saying laughingly that his mantle had got wet. But however adroitly she carried the corner of her neckerchief to her eyes, the young count noticed a few clear, treacherous tears rolling down her blooming cheeks.

"Come, let us go to the house," continued she,

pointing toward a dilapidated cottage, which peeped forth from its hiding place among the birches and maples, a stone's throw from the beach.

The youth did not offer to hinder her, but, still standing in the boat, pushed off from the shore.

"Yes, go to Jane!—go!" said he. "Why should I go with you, when you no longer love me?"

"What will you do?" cried the girl, in embarrassment, amazement, and vexation. "The boat is half full of water; it will soon sink."

"It is all the same where I die, here or in Poland, when you no longer care for me." And with these words he began rocking the boat, whether intentionally or otherwise, so that more water poured in, and the boat could scarcely keep afloat.

"Oh, how can you be so wicked!" exclaimed the girl, vainly trying to hide her fright. "Come back!—only come!—and I will tell you something."

"Not until you address me more familiarly, and promise to love me, as of old."

"Well then—Bernhard, you are the naughtiest boy I know; and yet—I cannot help loving you."

The young count pushed the boat quickly toward land, but at that moment it sank. The girl on the shore uttered a loud cry; but there was no danger, the water being scarcely two feet deep. The youth sprang to land, and threw his arms about Greta's neck. Their tears fell as freely as only the tears of youth and love can fall at seventeen years.

CHAPTER II

BLACK JANE'S COTTAGE.

"WATER! only water!" sounded a voice behind them. "Tears, which dry as quickly as the velvet of the mantle! Love, which perishes with the withering of the tender leaves! Youth, which forgets its long future for the throbbing pulses of a momentary passion!"

The two young people separated, surprised and embarrassed, and striving to hide their tears. Behind them stood an old woman of strange aspect; a faded black head-cloth covered her grey hair and a part of her wrinkled, withered face; a black jacket, equally faded, fitted tightly to a skirt of the same color, and served to heighten the unusual pallor of her features and the transparency of her shrivelled hands. In spite of the poorness of her dress, no holes or tatters could be seen; a certain nicety, an unmistakable cleanliness and orderliness, showed clearly that, with all her poverty, the old woman cherished the memory of better days.

Black Jane, as she was usually called on account of the uniform color of her dress, was only the poor widow of a discharged soldier, who had moved here a few years before, and obtained from the rich Count of Majniemi the little holm, with its cottage, as a homestead. Nobody could say anything discreditable of her. She lived mainly by what she received from the castle; gaining a little extra income by telling fortunes, restoring stolen goods, and the like. But the superstitious did not fail to regard the old woman with distrust on account of these little arts, especially as she was a German by birth, and, as was generally believed, a Catholic in

religion. It was whispered that her husband, a soldier in the Thirty Years' War, had participated in bloody deeds—that he had buried a plundered treasure, that Jane knew of it, and, in remorse, devoted her old age to penance. But all this was hearsay, which no one could know with certainty; all that was known was, that only one living being possessed the old woman's friendship and confidence, and that was the steward's pretty daughter, Greta, who from childhood had been her favorite and the only one who could gain frequent entrance to the solitary cabin. What was not so well known was that the young count, through his boyish love for Greta, had gained some little share in old Jane's friendship, and often visited the cottage secretly, in Greta's company.

"It isn't worth while for you to scold now, mother," said Greta, who thought it well to assume a tone of gaiety. "Please conduct us to your house; that is the least politeness one can show to invited guests." And with this she threw her arms about the old woman's waist and whirled her around mischievously.

"Youth and folly," grumbled Jane, accustomed as she was to the girl's familiarities. "Come on then; it is as well as to play hawk and dove out here. But I fear that your father would be little pleased to know this," added she, with a glance at Greta.

"Father has gone to Åbo, and will not be back until late to-night," answered the girl, hesitatingly.

"Well, come on then. The little count is as wet as a fish."

The "little count" looked at Greta, and heard not a word. They now went to the cottage, which stood on a little knoll, surrounded by thick shade-trees. Its interior was humble, like the outside; it contained a bed, a table, two chairs, a large oak chest; but on the wall hung two valuable copper-plate engravings, one representing Pappenheim on horseback, the other a half figure of Gustaf Adolf, painted by Van Dyke, and en-

graved by the celebrated Pontius. Opposite them hung a cheap Nuremberg wood-cut, representing the Virgin Mary and the infant Jesus.

Jane set before her guests a home-made dish of cranberries cooked in juniper syrup, and beside it a stone mug of birch sap. Then she went out, as she said, to get fuel for the fire.

"What do you think?" said Count Bernhard, glancing after the old woman. "Does she intend to deal honestly by us? Are you sure that she will not betray us to your father or mine? That would be the same as to raise between us a wall of copper and stone."

"I think," said the girl, "that Jane has good reasons for serving us. She likes us, and then—I know what no one else knows. People think her a sorceress; and yet she is only a human being, who has suffered much and observed much, and who therefore sees farther into the future than others. Father is quite ill-humored toward her; I never dare to come here except when he is away. He would almost feel like having her burned as a witch, if he knew that we met here."

"But do you really love me, Greta?" interrupted the youth, pursuing his own train of thought. "You see, to-morrow I am to go hundreds of miles away; I must know what I have to live for and fight for."

"You must forget me, Bernhard," said the girl abstractly, as she unconsciously crushed a cranberry between her fingers. "Never in the world can I become your wife—I?"

"If you talk like that, I will go away immediately. My father was the son of a peasant's daughter, and yet he had a princess for his wife. Why should the gulf between you and me be greater than between him and her? Are you not the most beautiful rose and . . . ."

Greta smiled; but even in doing so, two transparent tears glistened in her eye-lashes. "Why, how that would look!" said she. "You never talked so before, Bernhard. It sounds strangely. Did you learn that

in Stockholm? Now listen to what I say: think of me as a sister only; and I will think of you as a bird in winter thinks of the summer that is past."

"You do not believe me; but you shall see. Jane can tell fortunes; she shall tell ours. Shall we lay a wager?"

"A wager—about what?"

"Do you see this ring on my finger? It sparkles in the sunlight, as if it had been wrought of the radiance of the stars and the glitter of the waves. When Queen Christina was in foreign lands, she made a present to all her pages. To me she gave this ring; it is worth at least a thousand dollars. Now we will wager: if Jane predicts that I shall ever love any one but you, the ring is yours; but if she predicts as I know she will, then you must give me . . . let me see, the blue-bottle you have fastened in your kerchief, and that will signify that we live in hope."

"A nice wager, indeed! Do you think I would dare to receive diamonds and queenly gifts? Promise me, rather, the copper ring which I have seen your father wear so constantly; that would be more suitable for me."

"You know not what you ask, Greta! My father places great value on the copper ring—no one can tell why. 'Bernhard,' said he one day to me, 'I shall sooner or later die a sudden death, like your mother. Above all else you must preserve this ring; your whole prosperity depends upon it.' I learned no more; but what do I care for prosperity without you? when I once get the copper ring, I will give it to you—that is, if I lose the wager. Here is my hand upon it."

"But if you repent, Bernhard . . . . "

"I have given you my hand upon it. But then you cannot refuse me the blue-bottle either."

"Agreed. See—here is a cranberry; eat it."

Jane now came in with the fuel; and soon a cheerful fire blazed on the hearth and made a summer warmth. The old woman took the count's velvet mantle and

spread it out to dry. Then she placed his chair before the fire-place and forced him to sit down.

"There, now we will first dry the nice boots. Is it fine manners to try to walk upon the water, as though it was in winter, and come to land like a perch? It is plain that you are used to having your own way; but very little ceremony will be shown you here, my fine young cavalier."

"Just as you choose, mother Jane. I will obey you like a child; only promise me one thing: Tell Greta and me our fortunes."

"Tell your fortunes! No, indeed; pray let that matter alone. It is not good for human beings—only harm and wickedness—to look into the future."

"And you say this, Jane—you, who tell fortunes for the whole parish?"

"That is quite another thing. To girls I predict husbands, and so they give me a pair of stockings; to old women, I predict long flax, to old men, good crops; and then they give me some loaves of bread or a jug of milk. But to you . . . . no, let it alone; that is the advice of one who wishes you well."

"But I want you to tell our fortunes, Jane. If you do not, I will go away immediately, and you will never see me again."

"Well, well, my fiery fellow! Give me your hand, and then—look out for yourself!"

Count Bernhard extended his hand, which, notwithstanding its delicacy, was not a little sunburnt. The old woman studied it attentively, calculated the lines and creases, while her face brightened and clouded by turns.

"Good fortune!" exclaimed she, in disjointed words; "a prosperity equal to your father's, my young lord, and even greater than his . . . . High shall you rise, ... very high . . . . princes and dukes shall own you as their equal;—and yet you shall one day fall, through your own acts . . . . "

"That is all right," broke in the youth, impatiently; "go on. Tell me Jane: can I, and will I, ever give my heart to more than one?"

Jane looked at him curiously, almost contemptuously. "You are seventeen years old," said she; "I understand. But since you ask so earnestly, I will answer in the same way. You surely can and you surely will love many."

"That is impossible! you only say it to vex me!" retorted the youth, excitedly.

"But, you see, I can read it plainly in the lines of your hand. One, two, three . . . . this mark signifies a princess; . . . . four, five . . . . here we have a royal person; . . . . six, seven . . . . another man's wife . . . . fie, Count Bernhard! . . . . eight, nine, an actress . . . . and you also married; . . . . ten, eleven, twelve . . . . I see no end to the long line of sweet-hearts."

"He will give his heart to twelve!" exclaimed the young girl at Jane's side, in a peculiar tone, half jesting, half rueful. "Do you hear that, Bernhard?—twelve!"

"It is not true, it is a lie—eleven times a lie!" returned the young count, in vexation.

"Do you wish to hear more?" continued Jane, mercilessly. "Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen—then you stand at the verge of your downfall. Sixteen, seventeen—this line runs into the first—you will one day return to your first love, but I fear that both you and she will then have gray hair."

"Fifteen times a lie! Sixteen times a lie!" cried Count Bernhard, beside himself with amazement and vexation. "May all the evil spirits swallow you, old witch!" And with these words the youth rushed to the door.

"Farewell, Greta!—we will meet to-morrow early in the castle park; the copper ring will be yours," exclaimed he, from the doorway. Then he hastened to the boat, and rowed so furiously across the fiord that

the little craft was momentarily in danger of upsetting. Reaching the shore, he untied his horse, threw himself into the saddle, and dashed away.

Jane and Greta followed his rash course with their eyes. "Aye, aye, the hot blood!" sighed the old woman thoughtfully. "His will certainly be a life full of the hottest strife!"

"I am angry with you, Jane!" said the girl, half weeping. "Had you said two, I could have forgiven you; but seventeen—that was too wickedly said."

"Am I to blame for it?" answered the old woman, with a jerk of her shoulder. "But now he has taken the boat away; you will have to stay with me until early to-morrow morning."

"Impossible! I dare not. My father will come home to-night, and if he learns that I have been with you, it will end badly."

"But how will you cross the fiord?"

"You shall see," answered the girl, briskly. She took off her clothes quickly, tied them together in a tight bundle, and bound this fast to her head. A minute later, the mirror-like water had enclosed her white shoulders. She swam like a water-fowl; glittering little wavelets rippled about her neck, and only the pretty blonde head was seen gliding forward over the surface of the water. A few minutes later, she had safely reached the opposite shore.

CHAPTER III.

MAJNIEMI CASTLE.

THE middle of the seventeenth century was the most brilliant period of the Swedish and Finnish nobility. Founded upon birth, privileges, and warlike deeds, shining through new dignities and hereditary rights, satiated with both glory and pillage from a protracted foreign war, the nobility had in the reign of Queen Christina become more arrogant in its plans and pretensions than at any time since it had the crown at its disposal. While reaching out for the diadem with the right hand, it did not scruple to appropriate lands and demesnes with the left. Placed midway between king and people, it pressed upward and downward with equal force, threatening the king with elective rights, the people with serfdom. In vain had Christina—lavish of everything save what it was not her's to give, affection—dispensed honors and titles indiscriminately to deserving and undeserving, in such measure that grooms, coachmen, and cooks took their seats in the Swedish house of nobles. All worldly advantages were enjoyed by the aristocracy; it swelled like a spring flood over the barriers which government and people strove to raise against it, and threatened to overwhelm the kingdom. And yet this monster of power and influence had, with all its insatiate pretense, so much of real merit, so much of honor and nobility in its heart and on its escutcheon, that two centuries later Sweden's two greatest historians engaged in a bitter controversy regarding the direction in which the scales had most inclined—toward the welfare or ruin of the kingdom, under the aristocracy of the seventeenth century.

Since the death of King Gustaf Adolf, the Thirty Years' War had become fiercer and more destructive than ever. The spirit of clemency which the Swedes had before shown the vanquished, had quite disappeared. Struggling for life and death, the conqueror mercilessly seized everything within his reach, and returned home laden with booty from a hundred plunderings. Almost all the surviving great commanders after Gustaf Adolf, who had not squandered their spoils as quickly as they were gained, went back to Sweden with large treasures, built themselves magnificent palaces in Stockholm or in the country, and retained until their death their warlike habits in the midst of princely splendors. A few of them retired to the more remote regions of Finland, and erected on its shores their defiant castles of stone; but most of these wearied of the monotonous pleasures of the chase and the quiet of rural life, and as long as they were able hovered about the festivals of Queen Christina, or shared in the wars of Charles Gustaf, reserving for Finland the waning lustre of their last years, until immured in the vaults of Åbo cathedral or in the family tomb of a solitary village church. And gone for the most part are their manors, devoured by the tooth of time and the ravages of war; but hundreds of churches in Finland still preserve the last sad mementoes of this brilliant aristocracy—mausoleums and tablets, escutcheons and inscriptions, chandeliers and altar services, as well as those once-magnificent tombstones upon which now tramples the indifferent foot of the wayfarer, and among whose half-obliterated runes one is always sure to read at the beginning of the date the numbers 1 and 6.

One of these country-seats which evidenced so much grandeur and wealth, and whose splendor has faded with that of the nobility, was Majniemi. Built by Count Gustaf Bertelsköld in the year following the peace of Westphalia, it had derived its name from the Catholic saint Maria: Marienäs. But this name was

from the first strange to the tongue of the people, and was soon changed to Marjala, then to Majniemi, which latter form became generally adopted. At the time when our narrative opens, in the year 1656, Majniemi still stood in all its pristine glory; the three-storied stone house, with its steep copper roof curved inward, and its high copper-clad towers, had a defiant mediæval appearance, and looked haughtily down upon the humble cabins surrounding it. From the broad stairway, tesselated with white marble, up to the spacious halls, adorned with coats of arms, weapons, and elk-antlers, and on to the dark winding stairs, the small turret chambers, and the strange ornaments on the walls and ceilings, executed in old German style, everything seemed at once so extravagantly rich and so capriciously antique, that the beholder might more easily fancy himself in the heart of Germany, in one of its old princely castles, than here on the shores of Finland in the northern abode of poverty and destitution.

When we study Dahlberg's *Svecia antiqua et hodierna* and look upon the palaces of the nobility in the seventeenth century, in their undiminished grandeur and magnificence, there seems to rest upon them a burden of ancestral pride and arrogance, very oppressive and antiquated to modern eyes. Majniemi castle, still so young, gave one the same impression. Only six or seven years old, it seemed already to have born the weight of centuries. Perhaps this was due to the fact that its owner and founder, the proud Count of Bertelsköld, had resided in his castle but a few years before new wars called him to devote to king and fatherland the unimpaired strength of his manly arm. Perhaps it was because the grace of no womanly presence shed a milder light over the castle, and diminished the sense of its haughty grandeur by the side of the wretched cabins of the dependants around.

It was between five and six o'clock in the morning; Majniemi castle mirrored its proud walls in the calm

waters of the sunlit bay which laved its foot. A gentle May shower had fallen in the night; all nature beamed with youth and health, and the air was laden with that indescribable freshness and rejuvenation which renders the northern spring so beautiful. The larks trilled high up in the heavens, the swallows darted swift as flashes of light through the clear spaces, and the bullfinches chirped merrily among the tender leaves of the light-green birches.

In a field close by the park, and a little distance from the castle, a number of the count's dependants—men, women, and children, ragged, thin, and famished—were engaged at work. During the middle ages, the erection of a castle was looked upon as a calamity to the whole region. The times had much changed; the law tried to put a check to the aggressions of feudal power, but the law in Finland was as yet extremely feeble. The great lords and their stewards did about as they pleased, and complaints served only to bring ruin upon the complainers. Even here, in such close proximity to Åbo and the highest court of justice in the country, oppression and injustice pursued unhindered their reckless designs upon the welfare of the people. The building of Majniemi castle had impoverished the surrounding region, and all that war and want had spared was drained for its support. It is probable that Count Bertelsköld had no suspicion of the extent of his subjects' need; far away at the war, he scarcely gave a thought to the matter, and was quite satisfied with his estate, if only the steward sent him at regular intervals the not inconsiderable sums which, in accordance with the fashion of the times, he squandered, unmindful that he had squeezed the last farthing from his poor peasants.

The laborers were engaged in a hard and extensive task. The spacious park, thickly stocked with deer for the pleasure of the count in hunting, was to be enclosed in a stone wall, in place of the old wooden fence.

Since four o'clock in the morning, the peasants had hauled stones and piled them in high rows, while the overseers, appointed by the steward, stood by with their slender switches of hazel and mountain ash, ready, at the first sign of laziness or disobedience, to lay them upon the back of the offender. A woman, half disabled by age and hunger, had not wheeled her barrow-load of small stones, designed to fill the empty spaces between the larger ones, as fast as the overseer required, and therefore received some strokes of the switch, under which she sank down fainting. Her son, a boy of about fourteen, seeing the cruel treatment of his mother, threw himself in blind fury upon the overseer, scratching and biting him with all his might. The overseer, a large, heavily-built man, seized the boy by the neck, threw him to the ground, and began beating him unmercifully. Some of those standing nearest stopped their work, took the boy's part, and muttered threats against the overseer. The latter struck out in a rage with his hazel switch; one of the laborers, hit in the face, seized the overseer around the body, threw him in his turn to the ground, and richly paid back his share of the blows. A number of the others now mingled in the affray. It became almost a revolt. The anger of the peasants, long repressed, now sought relief; they threw down their tools, seized fence-stakes, felled all the overseers to the earth, and began thrashing them so vigorously that they would scarcely have escaped with their lives, had not the arrival of a newcomer suddenly changed the whole aspect of affairs.

"Master Adam!" exclaimed one of the bystanders, and this name had a magical effect. In an instant the stakes were dropped, the overseers were left in peace, and all hurried back to their work in the greatest haste, glancing shyly around for the threatened danger.

Master Adam, the steward, who was universally feared, approached by the path from the castle. He was a tall and powerful man, about fifty years of age,

in attire something between a nobleman and a peasant. His short hair, almost white, was covered by a winter cap of dog-skin; the thin compressed lips, the small grey eyes, and the low sharply projecting brow, expressed at once boldness, cunning, and hardness. His sharp eyes had observed the tumult from afar; yet he did not quicken his pace; he approached with a seemingly calm demeanor, confident of his power over these people, who for so many years had learned to hold him in dread.

Master Adam listened to the complaint of the overseers with patience, and immediately instituted summary proceedings. So great was the terror of the laborers, that not one of them ventured to utter a word in his own defense; doubtless because they knew too well that this would only make matters worse. Only the boy of fourteen, who had begun the revolt, clenched his fist frantically at Master Adam, to the dismay of all the beholders, and exclaimed:

"If you don't let my mother alone, I will kill you when I become a man! First you took my father; and he fell in the war. Then you took my eldest brother; and he never came back. Then you took our horse for taxes. Then you forced my other brother to haul stones, because we had no horse; and my brother overworked himself and died. Now you have forced mother and me to do three days' work every week without wages, although we have not a bit of bread to eat. And now your overseer has beaten mother and me. It is a shame, Master Adam! you can have me flogged to death, but I still say, it is a shame!'

"What is your name?" asked the steward abruptly, and almost scornfully, looking sharply at the boy.

"As if you did not know!" answered the boy, in a defiant tone. "Maths is my name, and Maths was my father's name, and they have called us the Lampi-folks, from the moor where our cabin stands. Write that

down in your black book; the Lord will one day write it down in His."

"You have good lungs," resumed the steward, sarcastically; "it would be a sin not to let you use them. Put the boy in the mill-room," continued he, to the overseer; "give him two floggings a day, and let me know when he begins to cry for mercy. Take the mother out of the way, so she will not hinder the work; she can do her day's task over again to-morrow. And you others who have shown rebellion, do you know, you pack, what it means to be rebellious toward your lord and master? Caps off, varlets! You, Nils, struck my overseer first; ah, I know you well, my fine fellow! Take him off to the provost, and from there, in the prisoner's cart, to Åbo castle. The rest of you must make your peace with the overseers, and give them full atonement; after that, you must draw lots, and eight of you shall be packed off in the next squad of soldiers for Poland. Do you understand, you knaves?"

Two of the overseers hastened to seize the boy and Nils, to take them off. The boy's mother, who had been beaten, opposed them, and threw herself, alternately threatening and beseeching, in their way. All the laborers, to the number of forty or more, had gathered around the spot, looking now at the steward, now at each other, with glances of fear and hatred. Master Adam scented mischief; the moment was critical and his power was at stake. But chance came to his aid. In the park was heard the barking of dogs, and directly afterwards a shot. All eyes were turned in that direction; for at that time of the year, when the deer had young, there was never any hunting in the park.

The barking drew nearer; the branches rustled, and out sprang a young elk, straight toward the place where the old fence had been torn down, to make room for the new wall. Some of the peasants gave a cry; the elk started back; again a shot was heard, and the

beautiful creature rushed bleeding among the yielding throng of peasants, but only to take a few steps, stagger and fall, breathing its last with one of those sad and imploring glances which all hunters know. Right after the elk came the dogs, and after them the young Count Bernhard on horseback, with the discharged gun over his shoulder.

The youth stopped an instant, evidently disconcerted at encountering here, while hunting at so unseasonable a time, the stern steward for whom he, although heir and master of the castle, had cherished an involuntary respect from childhood. Yet his pride quickly conquered; he dismounted from his horse, and approached the elk, with the indifferent remark that fortunately it was a stag, and thus no damage was done to the young. The laborers bowed respectfully; the steward took off his dog-skin cap, and said, with a mixture of humility and irony:

"Your grace has the right to destroy your game whenever you please."

The steward had not time to say more, before the Lampi-woman threw herself at the feet of the young count, and cried: "Gracious lord, have mercy upon my son! They will put him in the mill-room; you do not know, you, what the mill-room is. Over the large water-wheel there is a dark cage; its floor is of slat-work, and it is constantly sprinkled by the damp spray; and there the steward makes his prisoners sit day and night, without food, in cold and darkness, drenched with the water, and deafened by the roar. Have mercy upon my son!"

"Is it as she says?" asked Count Bernhard, with a doubting glance at the steward, who saw himself suddenly changed from judge to accused.

The steward described the revolt, with the same tone of contempt for the peasants as a moment before he had used in addressing them. But he had miscalculated the effect of this tone of superiority. He forgot the

fine nerves of pride at seventeen years; perhaps he did not suspect that the noble youth, so lately compelled to make a sort of excuse for his untimely hunting, was not displeased at finding an opportunity to show his authority over him, the servant. Count Bernhard looked kindly at the laborers, and said:

"You have committed a great offence, and neither my father nor I will let such a thing go unpunished, if it occurs again. But I do not wish my short stay here among you to be disturbed by any punishments. I pardon you this time, in the hope that you will be obedient servants for the future. I remit all penalty; I give you a holiday to-day, and wish you to have a good time. Master Adam, see to it that the people have their dinner, and in the afternoon two casks of ale."

The count rode away. The steward followed him in silence, and with dark looks. But the laborers set up a jubilant cheer, and the young Lampi-boy shouted, throwing his ragged cap in the air:

"Hurrah for the gracious young master! I shall remember this when I become a man!"

CHAPTER IV.

MASTER ADAM.

THE steward's house was situated at a stone's throw from the castle, on a height by the bay, which commanded a view of the entire region. This was necessary for several reasons; most of all, on account of the hatred which the steward had drawn upon him. Three of his most trustworthy and strongest men were employed at this house, which, surrounded by a close fence crowned with iron spikes, resembled an outwork for the

protection of the castle. Over the gable of the house hung in its frame a loud-sounding bell, by whose aid the steward could summon help from the castle, should he be attacked. The house was also provided with all sorts of weapons, and looked like an armory rather than the dwelling of a peaceful steward.

A little while after the events just described, Master Adam was seen to come out from his house, and cast an attentive glance toward the park. It was not long before his sharp eyes discovered two figures, dimly seen amongst the trees; it was Greta, his daughter, and at her side was the young Count Bernhard. A scarcely perceptible smile played upon the steward's lips at this sight.

"Not so bad!" muttered he. "The young eagle wishes to show his power early; but I have a thread that will hinder his flight." Then he went with a calm step to the castle; leaving the two young people undisturbed in their confidential stroll before the moment of farewell.

Master Adam was now but little like himself. A very different man from what he had lately been, he walked about among the collected laborers, distributing both food and ale bountifully, with a friendly word for all, and pretending not to notice the scornful and distrustful glances which met him triumphantly at every turn. The Lampi-boy could not control his tongue.

"Your health, Master Adam!" exclaimed he, as he forced his way to the ale-keg. "This ale was not taken from the mill-pond."

The steward smiled, and only answered: "You are mistaken, my boy; the malt is just from there."

But youth and love continued their pleasant ramble in the green park. Radiant as they with health and ardor, the May sun looked down upon them through the foliage of the maples. Shy as first love, as innocent and fresh and hopeful, the first anemones of spring bent under their wandering feet; and they did not see

them. The birds sang around them, but they heard them not. And yet they saw and heard it all; for to them all blended in a single sight and a single sound: sun, and flowers, and song of birds, all took one form and tone—the eye of the beloved, the cadence of the dear one's voice, as the moment of parting drew nigh, and all of life was mirrored in a tear, as nature in a drop of morning dew.

Birth, rank, wealth, a brilliant name, proud hopes, prosperity and glory, honor and power, bow your haughty forehead to the ground: there dwells within the precincts of the heart a power which levels heights and vales, and breaks down barriers between high and low; and it can accomplish all things, for it believes all things and hopes all things, and yet asks for nothing but itself. And hence the brightness of first love is so refulgent, and shines in memory long after it has disappeared, as the poet sings:

> "Now with darkness, now with light,
> A cloud arose and hid thee from my sight;
> Yet thou as radiant stood, when it had passed."

The sun was already high in the heavens when the young Count Bernhard remembered that he had to ride that day to Åbo, and was then to leave his fatherland. He seized the hand of the young girl; he, the rich and high-born youth, had never dared to ask a kiss from her blooming lips. He kissed the hand which rested warm in his; a mist swam before the maiden's eyes; and when she looked around, the young man had disappeared behind the oaks of the park.

Inexperienced youth! He awoke from his dreams, hopeful and unselfish; he little guessed what icy selfishness awaited him in the castle at home; to meet it, he needed the energy of a man and the experience of old age; and he had but a heart filled with melancholy, bliss, and sorrow.

Master Adam was awaiting him in the large hall.

The youth scarcely noticed him. But the steward, with a peculiar blending of boldness and humility, stepped forward to his young master, handed him with dignity a little bag of silver coin, and said, with a studied emphasis:

"This is all I have been able to gather up for your grace's journey."

"All right," answered the youth, without so much as a glance at the money; "put it in my portmanteau; I will give you a receipt presently."

"But," remarked the steward, somewhat disappointed, "here are but four hundred and fifty dollars in silver. Your grace will hardly find it sufficient for the journey and the outfit in Åbo."

"Very well, I understand," replied Count Bernhard, abstractedly; "you are to give me more; well, put it all together in my portmanteau."

"No, your grace, I am sorry, but I cannot give you more just now. Not until to-morrow, or the day after, are the rents to come in from the northern districts; and I am obliged to leave some one else to collect them. I must humbly ask your grace to grant me a discharge from your service, feeling sure that your grace's father will not refuse consent."

"What do you say, Master Adam?" exclaimed the youth, struck by the sharp intonation of the steward's last words.

"Your grace," replied the steward, "you are going to war. You will there have troops to command. It may some day happen that your men will rise in revolt, not against you, but against the sergeant who wishes to compel them to do their duty. The sergeant may punish this offense, which otherwise would utterly destroy discipline. But you, your grace, might be led there by accident, listen only to the clamors of the insubordinates, and pardon the guilty, or even reward them with a feast. Your sergeant cannot oppose you; he obeys.

but he does what his duty enjoins: he requests his discharge."

"But you are not in earnest, Master Adam! You cannot demand that I, who, after several years' absence, visit my paternal home for two days, shall burden the memory of these days with heavy punishments."

"Neither can your grace require that I, who have served your father faithfully for fifteen years, shall remain in a position where from this moment I can only meet the scorn and insubordination of those who should obey me."

"What satisfaction do you then require?"

"For me there is only one alternative. I must either quit your service to-day, or be permitted to punish the disobedient to-morrow."

"What you ask is impossible. My word can no more be broken than yours. Master Adam, you have not treated your people right. Privation and bitterness are written upon every face. It pains me to see them."

"Your grace does not know these people. Stubborn and stiffnecked, they can be kept in check only by severity. Loosen these bonds, overlook their disobedience to-day, and to-morrow they might raze your castle to the ground. The count, your father, needs thirty thousand dollars a year for his expenses. You, yourself, your grace, need at least ten thousand. The maintenance of the castle demands as much. Where will you get this money unless the people are kept in wholesome fear? Sixteen of your farms are mortgaged, thirty are deserted, in consequence of the conscriptions for the war. This year the nobility has doubled its escuage; every eighth peasant must don the soldier's jacket; here in this sea district, two boatmen must be taken out of five peasants. The plague has appeared in Åbo, and the people cry that the wells are poisoned. Witches and sorcerers tramp about, and pervert the minds with all sorts of diabolical stuff. Forgive a faithful old servant for asking if this is a time for mildness

and indulgence. I will not conceal from you, your grace, that if to-day I drop the reins, a general insurrection may break out to-morrow. But . . . if you prefer to follow the feelings of your heart, rather than the dictates of necessity and prudence, then I have nothing more to say. My accounts are in order, and I am ready, poor as when I came here, to remove with my daughter to Sweden . . . . "

"Show me some means whereby I need not punish," replied the youth, visibly impressed by the steward's dark portrayals, and perhaps also by the thought that the pretty Greta might go away.

"Your grace need not punish," answered the steward, with a scarcely perceptible smile. "Your grace goes to Åbo to-day, followed by the blessings and acclamations of the people. It is I who to-morrow will be accused of having acted against your will. They will hate me more than ever; they only see the hand that punishes, not the head that commands. But I am accustomed to be misjudged; what do I care for their hatred? I serve my master; that is enough; and I am ready to sacrifice everything for him."

Count Bernhard struggled with himself. At length his pride and sense of honor triumphed.

"No," said he, "let what will happen; you must find some other way. I will not break my word."

The steward was silent for a moment. Then he said: "Promise me, your grace, to call the laborers together before you go, and command them to be obedient to me in everything, as they ought to be to you."

"Will you then remain?"

"Yes, your grace."

"Well, I promise you."

Half an hour later all the subjects of the castle were assembled around their young master, whose horse already stamped impatiently at the castle-gates. Count Bernhard complied with the steward's desire,

and enjoined upon all unconditional obedience to Master Adam. A suppressed murmur mingled in the cheers; the young count did not heed it, however, but galloped quickly away on the road to Åbo. One person only saw with tearful eyes the last fluttering glimpse of his blue plume; it was the daughter of the stern steward, the gentle, light-haired Greta.

Scarcely was the count gone before Master Adam called his overseers. "Away with the ale!" cried he. "Out with the prison cart, and put Nils in jail. Eight of the most rebellious of the others shall join the recruits. The Lampi-boy shall be shut up in the mill-room, and his mother driven from her cabin instantly."

Terror and dismay seized all present. Only the Lampi-woman dared to raise her voice in lamentation.

"Woe, woe!" cried she. "Woe unto the unfaithful steward!"

The year 1656 was a grievous one for Finland in many ways. The enemy had carried devastation into Karelen; it was then that the Wiborg students courageously marched to the defence of the city. The harvest had failed in several provinces; the plague was expected; the war in Poland had swallowed up all the able-bodied men who could be spared from home. The king, not quite lawfully, had ordered the conscription not only for this year, but also for the year following; the peasantry grumbled, and were rendered more dissatisfied here and there by secret emissaries. Their fidelity to the crown remained unaltered; but, driven by need, the people in some parts, especially in the neighborhood of Åbo, gave ear to persons who tried to make them believe that the late conscriptions took place without the king's knowledge, at the instigation of selfish officials, who meant afterwards to sell the conscripts to the Danes and Russians. And thus it happened that disturbances arose in various places, that the people resisted the conscription, and only by

alternate force and persuasion could they be induced to comply with the decrees of the government.

The neighborhood around Majniemi, exasperated and impoverished by years of oppression, was one of the most inflammable. Late in the evening after Count Bernhard's departure for Åbo, a boat, containing two men and a woman, was seen gliding over the fïord to Black Jane's cottage. The old woman was asleep, or pretended to be, but was aroused by some violent knocks on the door and obliged to admit the untimely visitors.

"Does the devil possess you," scolded she; "that you cannot let folks alone at this time of night? Don't you know that the steward's whip will wake you at four o'clock in the morning?"

"It is just because we know it, that we have come here," answered the Lampi-woman, who accompanied the men. "The steward's whip will never waken us again, and in this you must help us, Jane."

"I!" burst out the old woman, with feigned surprise, although she very well understood the purpose of the visit.

"Yes, you!" replied the woman. "There is no time for words. Nils of Arvio is thrown into prison to-night; Maths, my boy, is put in the mill-room; I myself am turned out of doors; and when the next sun shall rise, these two men, with six others, will be sent to Åbo with the recruits."

"But what have I to do with all this? I must be satisfied so long as I am permitted to keep my hut."

"Well," answered the woman resolutely and mysteriously, "you must dispose of Master Adam this very night."

"Are you mad? Dispose of the steward!"

"Listen, Jane; it is not worth while for you to try to appear so innocent. Everybody knows that you understand secret arts, both good and evil. Your repu-

tation is almost as great as Puu-Jumala's, and by many you are thought more clever than Walborg Kyni of Tyrvis; so it is of no use for you to look so simple. You must prepare a witch-shot, to be thrown through the steward's window to-night, and when the morning dawns he will be dead in his bed."

"Go away! you have peeped too deep into the ale-jug, I see," said Jane, gruffly.

"Ha!" cried one of the men, "do you think we came here to have you make game of us? No, old woman; the misfortune is at our door, and you shall not evade us. If you do not quickly do what we ask, we will set fire to your miserable hut at all four corners, and roast you alive, old witch, by the blaze of your own timbers."

Jane looked searchingly at her guests, and seemed to realize that they, driven by desperation and superstition, were in a mood to keep their word.

"Very well," said she after some hesitation, "I will do as you wish, but not to-night. Do you believe a man is made way with as easily as a cat is killed? Do you suppose that witch-wort, crackle-wood and dragon's blood grow here in the house? Dead men's bones I could have, to be sure, and a lizard's head and toad's feet; but where can I get grave-mould, an owl's heart, and vipers' tongues, in a hurry? No, indeed, give it up for the present. We must wait until the change of the moon, for when it is new the herbs lose their power and cannot injure, but on the contrary cure. Come back in two weeks."

The men seemed perplexed. "In two weeks we will be on the way to Poland," said they.

"It is not worth while to stand here and whine!" burst out the Lampi-woman, the bitterest and most infuriate of all. "If witchcraft will not answer, then strength of arm shall. Quick! back to the boat; we have still an hour to midnight. Before the cock crows we will attack the steward with a force of forty men, and tear his house down."

The men still hesitated; the risk seemed almost too great. Jane said, intercedingly:

"To me it seems best for some of you to go to Åbo during the night and make a complaint to the governor. Perhaps you will find the young count there, and then you can gain redress for the steward's tyranny."

"Redress!" exclaimed the Lampi-woman bitterly. "We might as well complain to the hail which beats down our spring crops, or to the frost which destroys the young corn in the ear! Hail and frost will do us justice sooner than one high lord will touch so much as the flap of another's coat. What can we simple peasants expect when we know how it was a few years ago with the honorable prosecuting attorney Croell, who complained of the royal governor, and who had to thank his good fortune that he was able to escape from prison unharmed, but loaded with shame; and yet not a penny did the peasants gain by it. No! the poor man who in these times does not understand how to help himself, deserves to have the bread snatched from his mouth and the child from his arms;—miserable, cowardly wretch, to bear such an outrage, without courage to return justly the unjust blow he has received."

"If we could muster all the people in Arvio village and on the Lampi-farms to-night, we ought to make between fifty and sixty," remarked one of the men, thoughtfully.

"Three overseers and the steward make but four, besides Greta and the girl," said another, calculatingly; "but if the bell should ring for help, he will get ten or twelve men from the castle."

"Twelve and four make sixteen," computed the Lampi-woman. "They, sixteen—and we, fifty! Are there hearts in your breasts? You may call me a witch if I do not next Sunday announce to all the people at church how cowardly you have been, and the smallest child in the village will laugh in your faces."

"Quick! to the boat!" cried both the men, whose slow Finnish minds gradually became inflamed by the fiery words of the woman, and at last reached that point where prudence is forgotten in the strong consciousness of a just cause. In a short time, all were again on the opposite shore.

Jane looked after them, shaking her head dubiously.

"All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," said she, softly, to herself. "Is there in Finland no justice to be found except the right of bloody violence? But Greta must be saved. God have mercy upon her father, if they should get him in their power."

With these words, Jane unmoored a small boat which, in the dusk of the spring night, lay half-hidden among the rocks upon the beach, and hastened, with quick but noiseless oar-strokes, in the direction which the steward's enemies had lately taken. The night was perfectly calm; from the distant forest came the song of thrushes, and mingled with the plashing of the waves upon the slumberous strand.

CHAPTER V.

NIGHT SCENES.

ABOUT two hours before the scene in Jane's hut, Master Adam was standing on the high steps outside his house, from which, as it was situated on a hill, he could see far around. His piercing glances swept the region, now toward the castle on his left hand, then toward Arvio village, which, with its low roofs, appeared on his right hand, about a mile from his house, behind the grain-fields near the park wall. He followed closely

the steps of the laborers returning to their homes, and seemed satisfied when he saw them, one by one, and not in groups, retire along the paths forming the shortest cut across the fields.

On the highway leading from the castle there appeared a lonely wanderer, with a knapsack upon his back, walking straight towards the house. His step grew quicker as he approached, and before the steward had left the steps, the traveller stood at the gate, where he knocked and asked to be admitted. Master Adam went to open the gate.

"Is it you, Johannes?" said he, brusquely, yet without his usual severity of tone. "What brings you here to-day? You would do better to sit in Åbo with your grammar than to rove about the country with knapsack on your back."

"What would you have me do?" answered the newcomer, a young man of some twenty years, rather pale and slight, but with an expression of shrewdness and good-humor in his prematurely furrowed features. "What would you have me do? My provisions were exhausted, and there are so many other poor scholars in Åbo that charitable people cannot feed us all. So I felt that necessity knows no law. It is now near Pentecost; and I have ventured out into the parishes, hoping to gather some pennies and some loaves of bread, in order to keep on with *logicam* and *metaphysicam* until midsummer. You will not refuse me a shelter for the night, Master Adam? How is Greta? It is a long time since I saw my little bride."

"Well, well, my good fellow! we shall not need to hurry about the bridal wreath; first, push your studies, so that you may become a graduate, and get a little more bread in your sack; then we will see about the other matter. But please to step in now, and get something to eat. I suppose you have plenty of appetite."

"Indeed I have, Master Adam! But I have walked twelve miles to-day, all the time pondering a new thesis

which will afford our learned *Martinus Miltopæus* much pleasure. *An homo bestia sit?* Answer: *Certe, quia comedit similes suos.** And at this," added the student, with a shrewd smile, "at this I thought of the delicious pig's feet you will give me for supper, Master Adam!"

The steward seemed scarcely to notice this learned hint, but led his guest into the spacious hall, which, with two small chambers, occupied the main building.

"Take a seat," he said. "I will tell Greta to get you something to eat."

Greta appeared. The student took her hand and pressed it warmly; but the young girl bent her eyes upon the floor, doubtless to conceal the tell-tale traces of tears.

"How!" said Johannes, good-naturedly; "you have been crying, *pullula mea.*† Never in the world can I believe that you have been longing so much for me."

"Her pet bird has flown away to-day," the father hastened to answer, before Greta had lifted her lovely eyes. "Are you not a fool to mourn for such a fine-feathered chap? Come! make haste to find a pleasant word for Johannes, and a bowl of curds in the bargain. Don't you see that he is hungry enough to eat you?"

And the hard steward laughed heartily. He had some human feeling, even he; it was in his fondness for his daughter, and the ambition to think of her as the future wife of the industrious student—the wife of their parish minister. But Greta dared neither to look up nor to answer; she hurried out, and soon returned with the refreshments.

The student, undoubtedly more of a scholar than a judge of the human heart, credulously accepted the steward's explanation of Greta's tears, and sat down with stoical composure to his bowl of curds.

"Indeed, Master Adam," said he, "you are a man

*Is man a beast of prey? Certainly, for he devours his equals.
†My chicken.

to be envied: a warm room, a well-spread table, a gentle woman's hand—*numen domesticum*, as we express ourselves more politely than *dominus* Bång, who always speaks of his *mala herba*, his wormwood—besides the tranquillity of country life, *otium mentis*, and a community of shepherds and shepherdesses, who lead to you their lambs in rosy chains, and whose shepherd king you are . . . . . "

"Tell me, Johannes," interrupted the steward, who probably did not share the student's opinions of the pastoral life of the region, "do you wrangle as much as ever at your academy?"

"I forgive you, Master Adam," answered the student, vigorously attacking the curds. "I forgive you for applying a term so low as 'wrangle' to what we properly call a debate. Yes, indeed, the debates are still going on hotly; *dominus* Miltopæus proves that *dominus* Bång is a great ass, and *dominus* Bång proves that *dominus* Miltopæus is a heathen. So far as I am concerned, I prefer being a heathen to being a jackass; and without bragging I can say that last week I, as *posterior opponens*, thoroughly beat *dominus* Bång, both *majorem*, *minorem*, and *conclusionem*. *Dominus* Bång became *furibundus*, and threatened to denounce me for both sorcery and heresy, since he thought himself able to prove that I had once borrowed books from *dominus* Stodius, who, as you know, has been suspected of sorcery . . . . . But where did Master Adam go?"

While Johannes was thus discoursing, the steward had gone out upon the steps, to take another glance around the darkening neighborhood; he satisfied himself that the gate was bolted and the bell-rope was in order, gave the overseers instructions for the night, and examined the pans of a couple of long muskets which hung threateningly beside the door. After having taken these measures of precaution, he returned calmly into the house.

Greta had meanwhile taken advantage of her fath-

er's absence to inquire casually of Johannes if he had met any horsemen on the road to Åbo; and the student, with his mouth full of his supper, answered that the young count of Majniemi, with his two servants, had ridden by and splashed him with mud. Fortunately the room had grown considerably darker, for the sky had clouded toward night and seemed to promise rain; so that neither the student, nor her father, who just then entered the room, observed the deep blush which at these words passed like a gleam of light through the darkness, across Greta's young cheeks.

"It is ten o'clock," said the steward, in the authoritative tone which long habit had led him to assume, even at home. "Good night, children. To-morrow I will see what I can do for you, Johannes."

"Thanks, Master Adam," replied the student. "I have, in truth, not been so well fed since I was last at your house; and if you were *dominus* Bång I should challenge you upon a new thesis: *Num homo Deus sit?* Answer: *Certe, quia Deus nihil desiderat. Ego autem nihil desidero* (*scilicet post coenam copiosam*). *Ergo Deus sum. Quod erat probandum.** Good night, Master Adam!"

Greta kissed her father's hand, gave her own to Johannes, and retired to the so-called garret, a suite of two or three attic chambers, reached by a staircase leading from a portico at the rear of the house, and where she and the servant girl slept during the warm season. The steward retired to rest in one of the larger chambers, while the student stretched himself comfortably upon the straw in one of the rude bunks, which, in two tiers, one over the other, ran along the entire side of the room opposite the great fire-place. Here he soon sank into the arms of sleep, his head filled with ambitious thoughts of the debates in which he should conquer *dominus* Bång.

* Is man God? Certainly, because God wants nothing. But I want nothing (*i. e.*, after a solid supper). Hence I am God. Which was to be proved.

But the fact was that our honest though disputatious hero of the forum had indulged in too heavy a supper of pigsfeet and curds; for in spite of his weariness he slept uneasily, and troublesome dreams disturbed his rest. It seemed to him that he was sitting in the lower rostrum of the *auditorium majus;* behind and above him was Miltopæus, with long white hair worn flat upon his forehead, and before him stood the colossal and swarthy theologian, Professor Bång, flaming with anger and *odium theologicum*, as opponent *ex officio.* In vain did the respondent summon all his cunning, all his eloquence; his stalwart adversary poured down a shower of church-fathers and Hebrew phrases upon his head, and poor Johannes felt crushed, stunned, annihilated, while the figure of Bång grew darker and darker, and larger and larger, until, high as a steeple, it looked down upon him with unutterable contempt; and as Johannes surveyed the platform, he found it changed into an immense pyre, and sooty figures darted around it with torches, and the hissing flames rose toward the ashen-gray sky.

At this moment our friend the student awoke in horror and sat upright in the bed. The room was dark as coal, for the shutters were fastened from without; but to the student it seemed as if the terrors of his dream intended to torture him even when awake. In the silence of the night he could distinctly hear a strange, low, crackling sound, seeming to come from the eaves of the roof.

"Fool!" said he, composing himself; "the wind has commenced to blow, and is whistling through the park." And he laid himself down, resolved not to be frightened again by the terrible *dominus* Bång.

But that night the gentle power of sleep refused to scatter its poppy-seed over the eyelids of the student. The whistling and rustling sounds continued, and once he seemed to hear a distant murmur mingled with the stroke of a bell. Again he sat upright. Far up near

the ceiling of the room, over one of the windows, he saw a little gleam of light ; it increased slowly, grew clearer and clearer . . . . and an odor of smoke spread about the room.

He sprang up. "Fire!" cried he, hurrying to the bolted door of the steward's chamber. Soon was heard a movement from somebody inside.

The steward, half dressed, rushed out, and tried to open the outer door. It was closed, and bolted from the outside. In one moment, Master Adam comprehended the full danger of his situation.

"The rascals!" exclaimed he. "They have climbed the fence, barricaded the door, and set fire to the roof with fire-balls. What miserable louts have been on guard to-night? They have drank too much ale, and have stupidly slept away our safety."

The steward had indeed guessed rightly. The rebellious peasants had surrounded the buildings, found the guard asleep, and with bows had shot burning balls of hemp and pitch against the roof, until at last it was ignited. Although walls and roof were still wet from the rain, the danger was evidently very great, for the wind was strong. It was about two o'clock in the morning, and the sky was covered with thick and heavy clouds, which retarded the usually early dawn.

Master Adam was not a man to lose his senses easily. His first thought was the alarm bell ; he pulled the cord ; there was no sound, and only a fragment of cord was left in his hand.

"Come, Johannes," exclaimed he. "They have cut the bell-rope ; but we will find a way to mark the rogues and rouse our people."

Quickly seizing the two heavy muskets, he handed one to the student, and furnished him with powder, balls, and tinder. Then both of them hurried up the steep stairway to the garret, whose narrow loop-holes, provided only with shutters, afforded a wide view. The light from the burning roof was not yet strong

enough to illumine the surrounding region, and the peasants, who had brought no torches with them, remained perfectly silent, trusting to the elements to carry out their schemes of vengeance.

"Do you see anything?" asked the steward, in a whisper.

"Nothing but the trees in the park, and the roof of the stables . . . . Hush! Over there by the fence I see a shadow moving."

"They have posted guards around so that we shall not escape. If I am not mistaken, a lot of the villains are near the gate—thirty or forty of them. The whole Arvio village has conspired with the Lampi-farmers to destroy me. But watch now, for I shall give those rascals a lesson which they will remember till their dying day."

And with these words, the steward thrust the heavy barrel of his musket through the loop-hole, took careful aim, and fired. There was a loud report; the flash lit the whole yard and the surroundings. A sudden consternation was observed among the peasants, and cries of pain were heard. The steward rubbed his hands exultingly, and hastened to reload his terrible weapon.

"May it do you good!" exclaimed he. "The barrel had fifteen balls! Shoot, Johannes! Shoot, before the villains disperse! Shoot right into the midst of the gang at the right of the gate."

The honest student did not answer, but his hand trembled. He aimed deliberately, and with apparent certainty; then he fired—into the air.

"A fine marksman!" cried the steward, in a fury; "good for nothing else than shooting words and nonsense. Load again!"

"But how is it possible to hit anything through this blind darkness?" replied the student, with well-feigned indignation, as he fumbled the ramrod awkwardly—mentally adding a conclusion according to the

rules of logic: "The villains over there are human beings and countrymen; we must not shoot human beings and countrymen; *ergo* I must not shoot these villains."

Whish!—At that moment a whistling sound was heard, without any report; something flew whizzing through the loop-hole, close by the student's ear, and fixed itself in the opposite wall.

"What was that?" exclaimed Johannes.

"What was it?" repeated the steward. "It was an arrow. These cursed people have no money to buy guns, powder, and balls; and besides, it is prohibited. So they still hunt with the bows and arrows of their ancestors, and shoot as straight with them as any sharp-shooter with his musket. It is a thievish way of shooting: no noise—only a little whiz, and death takes his victim. . . . Take care! don't get too near the loop-hole. I will give them, and the sleeping rascals of guardsmen, another rouser."

At that instant two arrows whistled together through the air; one remained fixed in the outer wall beside the loop-hole; the other grazed the inside of the loop-hole, tore off a splinter, hit the left arm of the steward, which supported the musket, ripped his coat-sleeve and made a deep scratch in his arm. Master Adam repressed an exclamation of pain, aimed his gun again, and fired. The cries which arose from the vicinity of the gate proved that this shot also took effect.

Meanwhile the long-threatening rain had commenced to fall in torrents—a circumstance very favorable to the besieged, for the fire on the roof, although aided by the wind, now made its way very slowly. Down in the yard arose noises, shouts, and curses, indicating either that the peasants, infuriated by the fall of their comrades, had resolved to assault the building, or that the overseers, who slept in a small cabin near the gate, had been aroused by the firing, and had attacked the peasants. The struggle grew more and more violent

down below, and every little while the heavy reports of the musket sounded from the loop-hole ; yet the steward dared now only to shoot into the air, for fear of hitting his own men, and hoping by this means to call assistance from the castle.

By and by day dawned. The peasants had evidently been disappointed in their hope of quietly burning down the house and the steward. They began, with good reason, to fear that a prolonged uncertainty would defeat their plans of vengeance, and resolved at once to put an end to the strife, which had already cost them four or five dead and wounded. While the men from Lampi continued shooting fire-balls against the roof, the men from Arvio threw aside their bows, and, armed with axes, attacked the buildings. The first one of the steward's men who ventured out to meet them, fell a victim to the vengeance of the peasants. His comrades, warned by his fate, dared not leave their cabin, and hurriedly barricaded the windows and doors from the inside. The Arvio men, secure from that direction, rushed against the main building, forced the door open, and poured in. At this moment, Master Adam's life was of but little value.

But the steward, who still expected assistance, was not a man to give himself up so quickly. Scarcely had he discovered from the garret the designs of the peasants, before he, bleeding, with only a rag bound around his arm, hastened to the stairway and barricaded it with empty ale casks which had been stored in the garret. The student helped him faithfully ; before the door was forced open, the stairway was barricaded.

"Well, Master Adam," said the student, "it is all very well ; you are *præses* here, and I am only *respondens;* but it seems to me that one of two things awaits us : either the *opponens* will force their way through the ale-casks (which in this case I would call our *argumenta fundamentalia*), and in that case we shall be dispatched more speedily than a superannuated parson at

an examination—or we shall repulse them, in which case we shall be roasted alive here in the garret; all of which I would call a disjunctive proposition, if you, Master Adam, had the slightest notion about logic."

Master Adam did not think fit to make any answer to the student's reasoning, but listened with growing wrath to the noise of the peasants, who ransacked the house, plundering and destroying everything, in their anger at not finding the object of their search. At last some of them sprang up the stairway and encountered the ale-casks. Immediately the whole crowd rushed that way; but the staircase was so narrow that only two or three at a time could reach the casks with their axes. This task became a Sisyphean one to them. Scarcely was one barrel knocked in pieces and removed, before another was thrown from above to take its place. The peasants relieved each other at the work of destruction, amidst angry cries and curses; but all in vain: barrel after barrel rolled down into the opening of the stairway. The time was wasted; it was already broad daylight; every moment they expected an attack from the steward's men at the castle. Then was heard above the tumult a foreboding voice:

"Let the wolf be roasted in his den! He shall not escape."

At these words, a thick smoke forced itself into the room—a sign that the fire had at last reached the inside of the house. The peasants retreated, with cries of joy, and malignantly awaited the certain death of their enemy.

It is now time to see what has become of the steward and his learned comrade in the garret. As soon as the increasing smoke had convinced Master Adam that the danger was momently growing greater, and he had listened in vain for sounds of assistance, he seized the student's hand and said:

"Now thank God, Johannes, that you have been starved in Åbo until your waist is as thin as a spindle;

the loop-hole over there faces the park ; squeeze yourself through it ; it is too narrow for me. As soon as you have slid down this rope, hasten to Greta in the loft, save her from the flames, and take her to my sister, the baker's widow, in Åbo. As soon as you get established in life, marry the girl ; take good care of her, and make her a good husband. And now, God be with you, my son !"

And the stern steward secretly wiped away a tear.

"But what will become of you, Master Adam ?" inquired the student, anxiously. "I will not leave you!"

"No objections, boy !" answered the steward, gruffly, and pushed Johannes through the loop-hole. Then he re-loaded his heavy gun, aimed it once more at the peasants, who, unsuspecting of danger, had gathered in a crowd in the yard, and fired. The effect was terrible ; four or five fell to the ground ; the rest, in a panic of horror, fled, believing that the men from the castle were upon them. In a moment the yard was empty. Master Adam seized the opportunity to hasten out, and succeeded in stealing, unperceived, down into the basement, where he was at least safe from the flames.

Meanwhile, Johannes had hastened to Greta's chamber. It was empty. Greta had disappeared. Johannes, unaware that she had been saved by Jane, felt, for the first time in a long period, some disturbance of his equanimity.

The steward's house was now wrapped in flames. But at last the men at the castle, heavy from the ale-drinking of the preceding day, had been awakened by the tumult. Twelve well-armed servants, all faithful to the steward, hurried to his defense. The peasants, outnumbering them, but armed only with axes and bows, scarcely ventured a resistance, but scattered in all directions. Master Adam emerged from his hiding-place ; he had lost his home and property, but congratulated himself that he had escaped with his life.

We will only add that these occurrences resulted in redoubled misery through the whole region around Majniemi. Soldiers were called from Åbo, and were quartered partly at the castle, partly upon the rebellious subjects. Instead of eight persons, twenty-four were taken as recruits and sent to Poland. Others were put in chains and taken to Åbo castle. Two of the foremost rebels were sentenced and executed. The numerous nobility in the neighborhood considered, not without reason, the cause of the Count of Majniemi as their own, and made every possible effort to subdue the rebellious spirit, with the greatest severity. It was a sad and desolate spring; many farms were abandoned; Arvio village became almost desolate; and on the Lampi-farms were only seen women, old men, and children. And all this in what was at that time the richest and most populous part of Finland.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BATTLE OF WARSAW.

WE now hasten from the scenes of Finland's misery, away to distant countries in the south, where her blood and treasure are being wasted in the aggressive wars of an ambitious king. On the throne of Gustaf Adolf and Christina sat the brave soldier, the great general, the high-minded and aspiring but scarcely politic hero, Charles X Gustaf. We are in July, 1656. What daring plans, what brilliant successes, what triumphs and humiliations, had been crowded into one brief year! Burning with martial ardor, Charles Gustaf had overwhelmed Poland—a country great but discordant, dismembered, selfish, and therefore power-

less. The third of July, 1655, the brave and famous Finn, Arvid Wittenberg, had broken camp at Stettin, and marched, with twenty thousand veterans of the Thirty Years' War, into Poland. Like a storm-cloud, the king hastened after, and before November he had conquered Warsaw, Cracow, Thorn—the chief cities of Poland and the military keys of the country,—defeated its scattered armies or persuaded them to surrender; chased the weak king, John Casimir, as a fugitive without kingdom, over the Carpathian mountains to Silesia; subjugated more than half of the extensive kingdom, and received the oath of allegiance of its inhabitants. At the pinnacle of his glory, Charles Gustaf did not divine the day of his misfortune. "The Swedish king," said a pamphlet of the time, "looks upon good-fortune as a square, while to all others she is a rolling ball."

Since then, what growing hatred had there been between nation and nation—bad faith, treason, perfidy, despair, assassinations, revenge, fanaticism,—and beside them, patriotism, courage, honor, and genius; what bloody losses, dearly-bought victories, distress, danger, and misery; what a Nemesis over the Swedish arms, which here, at the height of their glory, experienced the curse of an unjust war and the rage of a people fighting for the existence or destruction of its fatherland! Grand and brilliant but melancholy pictures are these of the workings of human passions.

In November and December, 1655, the Poles had realized the full depth of their humiliation, and the extent of their danger. Distress had re-united this volatile but chivalrous people under the banner of its king. Before, behind, on all sides of Charles Gustaf and his brave men, cities and towns rose up in arms; from every cabin came forth an avenger; every arm seized a sword; and John Casimir returned to his kingdom amidst the acclamations of the people.

Decoyed by traitors, the Swedish army still ad-

vanced, but at each step melting like an avalanche in the rays of the spring sun. Charles Gustaf had taken the route afterwards chosen by Charles XII to Jaroslaw; here he was obliged to halt, and, amidst indescribable dangers and difficulties, to begin his retreat, which he at last forced through to Warsaw, content to have saved a small remnant of his chosen men, and with them his own person, whose genius was the source of future victories. Meanwhile, in this great and hostile city, General Wittenberg, with three thousand veterans, half of them sick and wounded, had for six weeks defended himself, with immortal honor, against treason within the walls and the Polish king's hosts outside, the latter sometimes numbering one hundred and twenty thousand men. On the twentieth of June, 1656, Warsaw at last fell into the hands of the Poles, partly taken by assault, partly through honorable capitulation. Wittenberg fell a victim to the hatred of the Poles; in violation of the terms of surrender, he was thrown into prison, where the year following he ended his long and honorable military career.

But there yet dawned days weighted with changing fortunes and with great events. John Casimir was, soon after the surrender of the city, deserted by most of his troops; but there remained with him more than forty thousand men. Charles Gustaf, who had almost miraculously escaped destruction, had now allied himself with Frederick William, the Elector of Brandenburg, and hurried, at the head of eighteen thousand men, burning with rage and the desire for vengeance, to recapture Warsaw. For the first time, the two kings stood personally opposed to each other; and their combat is known as the three days' battle of Warsaw.

The French ambassador sought to avert the conflict and to effect a reconciliation. John Casimir replied: "I shall give the Swedes to my Tartars for breakfast." Charles Gustaf answered: "I would be glad if I had here before me all my enemies, that I

might crush them with a single blow." Inflexibly he resolved to attack the greatly superior forces of the foe.

The eighteenth of July, in the afternoon, the armies advanced to meet each other on the eastern shore of Vistula, opposite the trembling city of Warsaw. The Poles had their left flank protected by the river and by strong earthworks, their right flank by the forest of Biallalenka and a morass. The Swedes and the Prussians marched forward on the narrow plain between the river and the forest; their cavalry skirmished with the enemy, but night closed in, and the first day's fight was of little moment. Both armies spent the night under the open sky, without shelter and without food for themselves or their horses.

The nineteenth of July dawned. It was a hot summer day, cooled only by fitful breezes from the northeast, which blew the clouds of powder-smoke and dust into the eyes of the Poles. The Prussians attacked the Polish right wing, brought their cannon through the morass, and gained possession of a hill, which they held against the most violent attacks of the enemy. The Swedish forces moved forward to the support of the Prussians. From all sides the enemy attacked with the fiercest courage. Now the Poles rushed against the Swedish front, only to be received with grape-shot and repulsed. Now innumerable hosts of Tartars broke forth from the forest, galloping forward with levelled lances and hideous cries, only to be again put to flight by the Swedish and Finnish cavalry. The Swedish king formed a bold resolve, forced his way through Biallalenka forest, and, joining the Prussian front, stood in a curved line before the Polish right wing. From this wing John Casimir's quartians and hussars, the finest cavalry to be imagined, rushed forward to the attack. The horsemen from Upland, Småland, and East Gothland, received them; but the onset was too impetuous to be checked,

and the Swedes discharged their pistols too early; the ranks began to waver and to break. With furious cheers, the Polish hussars rushed in. But in the second line, to receive them, were the Finns, commanded by Fabian Berndes, and also Wittenberg's and Sinclair's cavalry. Here blow met with blow, steel with steel. The Poles checked their charge and wheeled about, leaving several hundreds of their bravest men dead on the field. At the same time, Charles Gustaf threw himself against fresh swarms of on-rushing Tartars, fighting in the hottest contest as a common soldier, shooting down two Tartars and sabring a third with his own hand. The wild rage of the savages was foiled.

Darkness closed in, and the battle was undecided. Another night was passed under the open sky, without shelter, in the vicinity of the enemy, amongst the dead and dying, with the certainty of another bloody conflict on the morrow. With such troops, a world can be conquered.

At daylight on the twentieth of July, the Swedes and Prussians stood again in perfect battle order. It was now their turn to attack. The first assault was directed against a grove in front of the suburb Praga; after a hot contest, the position was carried. The Poles had left their artillery unprotected, and it was captured by the forces of the elector; the infantry of the Polish right wing was put to flight, hurrying over the bridge to Warsaw, and destroying it after them. The left wing perceived this movement, and fell into disorder. In vain did John Casimir, with prayers and promises of reward, ride amongst his men; in vain did his heroic queen, Maria Louisa, with tears exhort the soldiers to stand for their country and their honor. Charles Gustaf advanced, his cannon swept the shore, the Poles were scattered in the wildest flight, and the battle was lost for them beyond recovery.

The Polish loss in this famous contest was over four thousand men dead and wounded, fifty cannon, all

their baggage-wagons, and the capital, Warsaw, which the next day surrendered without resistance. The Swedish and Prussian loss was estimated at seven to eight hundred men. But the results of the victory did not answer to its brilliancy. The Poles once more rallied, numerous, defiant, enraged; the Prussians and their elector made demands which Charles Gustaf could not grant, and marched off discontented. Left alone with eight to ten thousand Swedes to face the countless numbers and burning hatred of the enemy, Charles Gustaf could not maintain his position in Warsaw. Slowly and cautiously he retired, keeping prudently on the defensive; and thus it happened that the battle became a turning-point for the deliverance of Poland rather than for its fall.

But when the burning July sun poured its rays upon the sandy plains of Warsaw, where thousands of dead men and horses lay unburied, the effect was terrible and unendurable. The whole city was filled with the dying, the sick, and the wounded; and at last there broke out in this great lazar-house, born of the poisonous atmosphere, a devastating plague, the scourge of German wars, which swept relentlessly away hundreds and thousands whom the sword had spared; and from these poisoned regions the death-angel descended upon all the Baltic coast, and raged unchecked during the years 1656 and 1657, over the entire Scandinavian, Finnish, and Russian North.

During Charles Gustaf's famous retreat from Jaroslaw, the situation of the king and the army was more than once desperate. Enclosed within the neck of land where the river San flows into the river Vistula, the Swedish army seemed lost, and would indeed have been so, had not the genius, the courage, and good fortune of the king provided means to cross the San, and even to attack and capture the camp of the Lithuanians on the opposite shore. But the enemy hastened before him, with the intention if possible to drive him

into another similar corner, where the Wieprz river flows into the Vistula. The king assembled his leading officers in council. It was agreed that a plan should be tried for diverting the attention of the enemy from the course of the army. A detachment should be sent on the road to Lublin, to make a feint of relieving the Swedish garrison at that place. This detachment was doomed in advance; its mission was to draw upon it the whole hostile force, and to save the main army by its own destruction.

This plan was kept secret from the soldiers, but the higher officers could not be ignorant of it. Who would command this forlorn hope? The boldest hesitated. Then Count Gustaf Bertelsköld volunteered to lead the little force of Livonians and Finns, about three hundred men, consecrated to death. The offer was accepted; the detachment started, and, as had been intended, the Lithuanian army followed. For three days this little band defended itself against an enemy of fifty times its number. At length its strength was spent; it covered the road with its dead; it faltered, it bled, and fell under the ceaseless attacks by day and night. In less than half the distance to Lublin, the detachment was entirely wasted. Only four or five men escaped, with incredible difficulties, through the forest of Warsaw; and amongst these was Count Bertelsköld.

Shortly after the battle of Warsaw, Charles Gustaf, abandoned by the Prussians, retired to West Prussia. The king was in a gloomy mood; the good-fortune which so lately appeared to him a solid square had suddenly resumed the shape of a rolling ball. Town after town, region after region, were lost in spite of victories. The king was most embittered by the loss of Lithuania, where De la Gardie and Lewenhaupt continued a struggle becoming every day more hopeless against treason within their ranks and wild rage without.

"Ha!" exclaimed Charles Gustaf, angrily, "get me

back Lithuania, and I will give its conqueror a duke's crown."

"Your majesty," answered a voice from the group of commanders assembled in the king's tent for a war-council, "give me two regiments, and my head shall answer that Lithuania is again yours."

The king turned around, amazed at the boldness of a response which he had not expected. "And who," said he, "will answer to me for the possible fruitless sacrifice of both the two regiments and your head, Count Bertelsköld?"

"My good fortune!" answered the count, boldly.

The king smiled, and said, turning to Count Schlippenbach, who stood beside him: "There is yet a mortal who believes in good fortune."

"It is your majesty who has led the world to this belief," answered Schlippenbach, with more of flattery than was just then discreet.

Charles Gustaf frowned; and his long and very thin mustache curved in the bitter smile of disappointed hopes which played around his unusually thick upper lip.

"You may expect my orders to-morrow early," he said to Bertelsköld, who vainly tried to read in the king's blue eyes, usually so expressive, the character of the commission which he might expect.

The restless spirit of Charles Gustaf hated repose, and worked ceaselessly upon new schemes, each bolder than the last. It was as if a presentiment had told him that his career upon the heights of earthly fame and life was to be brief, and therefore every moment was precious to him. He slept very little. Though often in his campaigns disturbed during the night—he had given strict orders that his rest was never to be spared—and up early in the morning, yet he usually retired late, except upon occasions when his head was a little heavy with wine. And so he was now sitting late in the night, after his officers and soldiers had gone to

rest. Alone with his favorite Schlippenbach, the king with dark and thoughtful looks, examined a map of Poland, this dreamed-of kingdom of his, which lay before him on the table—a sheet of paper, a name, worthless and empty as reality itself at this moment.

"Cursed Brandenburgers!" exclaimed he, with his eyes fixed upon East Prussia, the region which Frederick William had demanded, and which Charles Gustaf had denied, the consequence of the refusal being the retreat of the elector. "Give a beggar butter on his bread, and he will ask for cheese too. Does this jackal believe that he only needs to follow the track of the lion in order to gorge himself with prey, and perhaps some day be the first to tear the limbs of the fallen king?"

Schlippenbach, the crafty Courlander, followed the king's glance, and stopped, like him, at East Prussia.

"The jackal has the dog's nature," said he, with that equivocal smile which, with the artful policy of the time, he wore upon his lips. "Hold the meat before the dog's nose, and he will follow wherever your majesty pleases. Louis XI was a great statesman. He observed through his entire reign one leading principle: promise, but do not fulfil; and Louis XI subdued all France."

"You are right," answered the king, whose policy indeed bore many traces of Schlippenbach's counsels. "Deceit against deceit, craft against craft! Ah, my dear princes! it is only Nemesis! You regard me as a hand which grasps a sword-hilt; I will show you that this hand not only knows how to strike, but also how to make you dance like puppets whenever I pull the strings."

Vain and mistaken diplomacy of that time, which could not raise itself to the noble and simple honesty that disdains to use low means for lofty ends! Not to rise above his time in this, was the darkest stain on the hero Charles Gustaf, and it was the secret of his fall.

"But," exclaimed the king, having once more silent-

ly glanced over spacious Poland, so small when represented on the map, "of what avail is prudence, or the force of genius, if good fortune does not follow in a mortal's footsteps? Let one be the wisest of mankind, the greatest of heroes, and struggle against this wilful and capricious power which we call good-fortune, and he thinks in vain, he bleeds in vain, and is nothing. Tell me, Schlippenbach, is there a mortal man who can command the good fortune of being eternal?"

"Your majesty," said the favorite, "I do not believe in astrology; the strong man believes only in himself; and yet, there are human beings who are so long and so persistently the favorites of fortune that we are led, almost against our will, to believe in some planetary influence. Your majesty is one of these favorites of a happy star. Obscured for one moment, it shines again with greater splendor."

"This Bertelsköld," continued the king, not listening to the Courlander, "he relies upon his good fortune, and I cannot bear that now. What gives him a right to speak such words?"

"In truth," replied Schlippenbach, "Count Bertelsköld is an uncommon man. Without having a brilliant mind, he has somehow managed to sail prosperously since his youth. He has been in hundreds of battles, he has encountered innumerable dangers, yet never has he once been wounded since at the crossing of the Lech. He has continually risen in rank, titles, riches, and position. No one knows with certainty his origin; it is only known that he is an upstart, upon whom your majesty's high predecessor lavished distinctions beyond measure. His estates are now among the greatest in the kingdom; and it would not surprise me if, after all this, your majesty's gracious jest about the ducal crown of Lithuania should become reality to Count Bertelsköld."

"You are right," replied the king, after a moment's pause, "this man has some reason to believe in fortune.

I need such men. And yet, at this moment I despise them."

"Such men, your majesty, are small compared with the genius which creates its own destiny. And genius uses them as blind instruments of its own purposes; once having served, they are thrown away. . . . . But since we speak of Bertelsköld, permit me to remark that his pride is as great as his good-fortune. None of your majesty's nobility suffer him at their side; his right place is in a conquered country, whose prejudices it is not necessary to spare."

"Yet still I ought to win the Lithuanians."

"Promise, but do not fulfil. Caress them first with a hand as soft as a woman's, and punish them afterwards with a scourge as hard as Bertelsköld. If your majesty really desires to keep Lithuania, to heal its wounds and secure its prosperity, send Würtz or Dahlberg thither. But if your majesty only intends to keep the country for a time as hostage, then send Bertelsköld thither with a letter of general authority in his pocket, and he will re-conquer the country blindfolded. That man has a peculiar ability to cause the downfall of others, while he himself is always ascending. Good fortune, your majesty, always demands equivalents; she lavishes gifts upon Bertelsköld, only on the condition of making all around him wretched."

"With or without mercy," answered the king, gloomily, "Lithuania is as good as lost, and must be regained. I have recalled Lewenhaupt to protect Carelia; De la Gardie, surrounded by hordes of furious peasants, is almost crushed. Why should I care for the far-off future? The Lithuanians have already twenty times deceived me. They themselves are the cause of this; I will send Bertelsköld to them."

CHAPTER VII.

COUNT GUSTAF BERTELSKÖLD.

ONE day in the latter part of August, 1656, a detachment of about twelve hundred men, Finns and Livonians, half cavalry, half infantry, marched along miserable roads, soaked with rain, through the wildernesses of Lithuania. Their mission was to relieve the fortresses and retain the country under Swedish dominion. This small force was all that Charles Gustaf could then spare to oppose a revengeful and enraged people, who had risen, man by man, to the number of at least a hundred thousand, to defend their fatherland from foreign oppression. From the immense disparity of forces, the audacity of this expedition seemed bordering on insanity, and was considered by all experienced commanders a useless spilling of the blood of brave soldiers. But it was just the audacity of the expedition which had captured the king's fancy; and possibly he depended upon the want of unanimity among the enemies, their lack of military experience, and their miserable equipments—points which, under other circumstances, might have compensated for the inequality of the forces, but which were here too strongly counterbalanced by the nature of the country. For the Swedish detachment had to march through immense forests and vast marshes, cross rapid rivers, and penetrate devastated regions where each day's provisions could be obtained only through the greatest danger, and where it was impossible to transport more than five or six light field-guns.

At the head of this expedition rode Count Gustaf Bertelsköld, now a major-general, our old acquaintance

of the times of Gustaf Adolf. The once slender youth was now a strongly-built somewhat portly man of forty-five years, with light hair, blue eyes, and a face tanned by Poland's sun and lightly marked with the scar of a sabre-cut, received in the fight at Lech. There was much in his person to remind one of the great Gustaf Adolf, particularly the expression of the eyes, the arch of the high forehead, and the martial carriage of the tall figure; but there was lacking the great hero's simple dignity, his calm and unaffected greatness, which was so imposing because it was without trace of effort. The features of the once delicate youth had hardened during the contests and dangers of twenty-six years into an expression more like defiance than heroic courage; the commanding glance required unconditional obedience; the sharp line over the moustache indicated an unbending will. The whole appearance of the general seemed more likely to inspire fear, than love and confidence.

And yet Count Bertelsköld, riding his strong-built, tall, dark-brown favorite horse, was an imposing figure, whose shining armor and plumed helmet were always recognized by the soldiers wherever the danger was greatest, the contest fiercest.

A few steps behind him rode a slender black-haired and black-eyed youth, scarcely more than seventeen years of age, whose thoughtful features revealed a soul inclined to romantic dreams. Bernhard Bertelsköld—for it was he—seemed, during the monotonous march through the forest, to pay but little attention to those around him. At his side rode his father's orderly, the old Pekka, covered with scars, whom the reader will undoubtedly remember from Breitenfeld and Bavaria. Now and then the orderly, with the liberty of an old faithful servant, opened his mouth to break the monotony of the ride; but as he got no answer, the lips of the old man closed in sullen silence, and then was heard only the steady tramp of hoofs on the boggy

road, or the occasional exclamation of a trooper, trying to keep his horse away from the marsh at the road-side.

And so the march was continued for some time in silence. But Pekka could not refrain from muttering to himself, as he looked upon his young master with a mingled feeling of indignation and paternal kindness:

"Crazy boy! he neither sees nor hears. He might ride straight into the marsh without noticing it. He gets that disposition from his mother; the countess was of that kind; she went about dreaming in the middle of the day; she saw visions, I believe. The devil take such people! I don't understand them at all."

"Pekka!" exclaimed Count Bernhard, whose thoughts had suddenly taken another direction, "tell me what are those stories which are circulating, about my father's copper ring?"

"What stories?" said Pekka evasively.

"Away in Finland there was one who wanted that ring, and I have promised to give it to her when I become my father's heir. I did not think much about it at the time; but yesterday when I noticed the ring on my father's finger, I asked him why he wore such a simple ring. Then he frowned, gave me a piercing glance from his dark eye, and asked in return: 'Do you know nothing of its history?' 'No;' answered I. 'When I am dead,' said he, 'you will find my will in the court of Åbo; and there you will learn all that you need to know;' and then he admonished me never to part with the ring. Tell me, Pekka, what does it all mean?"

"How should I know?" answered the trooper, in the same tone as before. "Perhaps it is a love pledge from the count's youth."

Count Bernhard pulled the reins impatiently. "I ask, is this right?" exclaimed he. "Never a word of confidence from my father! Never a father's love! Fear and obedience, and constant humiliation—that is

my lot! Every soldier in the army knows more about my father's secrets than I do."

"The general is a fortunate man," interrupted the trooper, almost without thinking; "Count Bertelsköld's good-fortune has become a proverb in the whole army."

"He, fortunate!" continued the young nobleman, almost bitterly. "Yes, if it can be called good-fortune to rise continually in honor, power, and riches. But do you not know that my mother died when but twenty-six years of age; that my two younger brothers died before her; that misfortune everywhere seizes upon those we have and love; that our dependants die of hunger, cursing us—yes, that the entire Swedish nobility hates and envies us? And you certainly must know that between father and son there has never been anything but mutual distrust and a feeling more like hatred than love. Oh, I am very unhappy; and my father not less than I. A blessing scatters upon us all outward splendor . . . ."

"It is your grandmother's blessing!" interrupted the trooper, wiping away a tear at the memory of the gentle Meri.

"Yes, but the curse follows in our track, and throws at our feet misery, hatred, and tearless graves!"

"It is the curse of your grandmother's father!" replied Pekka, shaking his gray head sorrowfully.

Count Bernhard became lost in thought, and did not answer. The setting sun threw its last rays on a dense forest of lindens and beeches through which the detachment had to march. They passed several cross-roads, all equally bad; but the one which was followed grew narrower and narrower, more and more marshy and impassable. The general ordered a halt, called the guide, and asked, in threatening tones, if that road really led to the fortress of Birzen—the first objective point of the expedition. The man—a Jew—with a solemn oath, answered affirmatively, bowing to the

earth before the gaze of the stern commander. The march was continued.

Meanwhile the sun was setting behind the tree tops; an approaching storm covered the sky with black clouds, and hastened the coming of darkness. According to all calculations, they ought to have reached the fortress before night; and the chief, as well as his men, contemplated, not without feelings of uneasiness, the growing darkness, in an uninhabited region whose dangers were increased by the certainty of their being surrounded on all sides by lurking enemies. The general quickened the march, and sent forward an advance guard of thirty horsemen to ascertain if the end of the forest were near and the open plains could be reached before night fully set in.

This squad was long absent. The guide was closely watched, and entertained with the pleasing prospect of a rope, ready to hoist him to the nearest tree at the least suspicion of treachery.

The storm broke, and the lightnings flashed over the tops of the beeches. The detachment was obliged to march with lighted torches and in battle order, ready for the worst.

Then reports of guns were heard between the rollings of thunder, and some of the advance guard galloped with loose reins toward them, with the grave intelligence that the forest, instead of ending, grew more dense and impassable farther on, and that the road was at last obstructed by strong barricades. No enemy had yet appeared; but the cavalry had discharged their pistols to warn those behind them.

For the second time, the general called a halt, and ordered the trembling guide to be brought before him.

"Miserable wretch!" exclaimed Bertelsköld, "you have deceived us. Choose between these!" And with one hand he clinked a purse of ducats, with the other pointed to the ready rope.

The guide wept and begged for mercy. In vain.

The count remained immovable. The rope was fastened to the branch of a tall linden, and the noose adjusted around the offender's neck, while, as if in scorn, the well-filled purse was held before his eyes. The tempest increased.

The situation of the detachment was in reality one of extreme peril. Led astray, betrayed in an unknown wilderness, surrounded by the enemy, the night, and the storm, every moment exposed to an attack in flank or rear, it was unable to form anything like battle order in the darkness and the morass, and cannon and muskets had been rendered useless by the pouring rain. But confidence in the good-fortune of the commander was so strong that as yet no one had lost heart; and it was undoubtedly just this confidence which proved the salvation of the detachment; without it, all would have been lost.

Count Bertelsköld showed himself worthy of this confidence. His voice did not for a moment lose its calm and commanding tone; all his orders bore the unmistakable stamp of a clear mind and unshaken will. Only two alternatives seemed open: Either they must retreat by the same way they had come, and entrench themselves as well as possible in the first strong position, so as at least to be secure from attacks in the rear, or they must bivouac where they were, throw up entrenchments, and so, in the best possible order, watch for the dawn. Both plans seemed alike dangerous, both almost impossible; and yet no other choice seemed left them.

But the general revolved within his bold head a third plan. When neither threats nor promises had any effect upon the obstinacy of the guide, the commander had the noose removed from his neck, took him aside, and spoke to him in secret. Some assert that the count on the one hand doubled the promised bribe, and on the other threatened to stretch the traitor over glowing coals. Others, on the contrary, believe,

and with better reason, that the Jew received promises of greater freedom for his people ; even that Bertelsköld bound himself by an oath to procure for them free admittance into all the dominions of Sweden, which till then had been closed against them.

The results of this conversation were, however, entirely unexpected. The general ordered fires to be built, the cannon and horses and baggage wagons to be collected at points on the road where the ground was firmest, placed three hundred men to guard them, and then delivered to his troops a vigorous and encouraging speech, in which he promised them victory, booty, and rest, if they would scrupulously follow his orders. Then, with the main body of his force, in light marching order, he retreated a few hundred paces, put out the torches, gave a new watchword, and, with the guide at the head of the column, entered a small by-road on the right, leading into the forest. The soldiers, accustomed to blind obedience, followed him, three abreast, in the deepest silence.

The march was extremely fatiguing. Every moment the soldiers stumbled over fallen trees or sank waist-deep in the morass ; all talking was strictly forbidden ; not a ray of light illumined the darkness ; only at intervals the lightning flashed between the trees, while the rain continued pouring down in torrents. Many were left behind from fatigue, many lost their way ; but the rest, with unchecked courage, continued their difficult march. At length, after more than an hour's struggle, they emerged from the forest. They had flanked the enemy ; in spite of the darkness, they could distinguish a vast plain, and at a distance was heard a low noise of human voices.

Count Bertelsköld now mustered his force as well as was possible in the darkness, and gave them a few minutes for taking breath, and for strengthening themselves with a draught of wine. Then he repeated his promise of victory and booty.

"There, my boys," and he pointed to the left, from whence came the sound of voices, "there stands our enemy. He lies in wait for us behind his barricade, like a wolf for his prey, and is so certain of it that he does not think it worth his while to come and take it. We will save him the trouble, and greet him in a way he least expects. Do you believe, boys, that those villains have come with empty hands? The nobility of this region have joined the peasants; they have both food and wine, which will taste excellently to us. And here before us are the plains, covered with rich estates; when the day dawns, they will be ours; I give them to you to plunder. If we conquer, each one of you will become a rich man; but if we allow ourselves to become frightened, not one of us will escape alive."

A low murmur of assent was heard in the ranks of the soldiers. The danger, hatred, and hope of plunder, all combined to increase their courage.

They now started again, with the utmost caution. A brook was in their way—they waded it; a half-reaped grainfield—it was trampled down. So warily and prudently did the detachment advance, that the Lithuanians had not suspected danger, before it was too late. With their whole attention fixed upon the forest and the barricade, they expected every moment to see the Swedes approach from that direction, and cheered themselves with the food and wine which they had brought from the estates of the noblemen.

In place of their muskets, which the rain had rendered useless, Bertelsköld had armed his men partly with cavalry pikes, partly with sharp sabres. Arrived, quite unperceived, close behind their enemy's backs, the Finns and Livonians rushed with a ringing cheer right into the camp of the Lithuanians. These would sooner have expected to see the heavens fall. Instantly the most frightful disorder arose. Twenty times outnumbering their enemies, but surprised, confused, and partly unarmed, the dense masses scattered

in all directions at the first attack Terrible, unchecked, and merciless, raged the pikes and sabres of the Finns; it was not a battle, it was a massacre, fierce, murderous, and unrelenting; more than two thousand fell under their blows, almost without defense; the remainder sought the open plains in the wildest flight; the whole camp, slippery with blood, strewn with dead and wounded, filled with arms, provisions, and all kinds of booty, was, in less than one hour, entirely in the hands of the assailants.

The victory was gained, but the danger was not yet past. There were still two or three hours before dawn. Bertelsköld, who feared to be surprised in his turn, when the enemy had recovered their senses, arranged a part of his men in battle order in front of his camp, while the rest, not without great exertions, levelled the barricade, in order to open a way for those left behind. The soldiers, worn out by the march, the rain, and the battle, now showed a disposition to begin the plundering. Their leader's powerful voice checked the disorder; he was seen everywhere, indefatigable and inexorable; rewards and punishments were dispersed with equal promptness. Bertelsköld was in that hour no unworthy disciple of the great Gustaf Adolf. His iron will succeeded in reuniting the loosened bonds of discipline. The enemy had neither wish nor opportunity for revenge, and when at length the long-awaited day arrived, the entire Swedish force, with the slight loss of twenty or thirty missing and as many dead and wounded, was gathered, safe, yet almost sinking from fatigue, within the captured camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

FALSE OATHS DESTROY GOOD FORTUNE.

THE bloody defeat which Bertelsköld had inflicted upon the Lithuanian militia was only one of the changing episodes of war, more fraught with revenge and devastation than with real progress to the Swedish arms. It resulted as might easily have been anticipated. The enemy, who at daybreak could no longer be in doubt of the weakness of the Swedish forces, gathered together with redoubled fury, like waves closing in the wake of the bold vessel which has for a moment cleaved their surface. Bertelsköld needed all his military sagacity, all the masterly tactics learned in the school of Gustaf Adolf, and, later, of Banér and Torstenson, to be able to cross the plain, surrounded by swarming enemies, procure rest for his worn-out men, revive their courage by the booty of two or three plundered estates, and at last to unite with the remainder of De la Gardie's detachment and proceed toward Vilna. He succeeded, however, in all this, through well-planned movements, through the discipline and perseverance of the soldiers, perhaps also through the discord and rapacity of the enemy; for, severely oppressed by his high-born masters, the Lithuanian peasant was not unwilling to use an opportunity to humble and to plunder them. Wherever the militia followed in the track of the Swedes, mansion and estate trembled not less for their own people than for the enemy. The country was mercilessly devastated by both friend and foe; horrible outrages were committed; but also many instances of devotion and self-sacrifice, of the touching fidelity of serfs to gentle mas-

ters, are chronicled during this time of waste and desolation.

The boldness and audacity of Bertelsköld astonished the Lithuanians. Unlettered and superstitious as they were, they sought for a supernatural cause. The half-forgotten rumors of the Thirty Years' War, regarding the witchcraft of the Finns, were revived. So great was the terror of the Lithuanians, that a single Finnish soldier was able to put swarms of them to flight simply by lifting his hand or by some words mystically spoken. Bertelsköld well understood how to make use of this. Prisoners in his camp were permitted, as if by accident, to witness strange conjurations, performed solely for their benefit. Now it was a soldier, who, disguised as one of the grand-dukes of Lithuania, long since dead, rose through a trap in the floor, and, bowing, extended to the general the grand-ducal crown; now it was a tame eagle, which was secretly freed, and, as it had been trained to do, settled down on Bertelsköld's helmet, in view of some prisoners; again, the general's dark eyes would be fixed upon a certain spot in the field, and in answer to his mysterious sign they would dig there and find a large supply of weapons and provisions. All this was witnessed by the prisoners, and then they were allowed to escape. The purpose of it all was easily accomplished. The escaped Lithuanians circulated wonderful tales. What human power could avail against this mighty chief and sorcerer, who, as it pleased him, ruled spirits, human beings, and animals, and who had only to point to a place in the earth to find provisions and weapons abundant for his need?

Although Bertelsköld had taken all the Swedish troops which could be spared from the country, his entire army numbered less than three thousand men. With this small force, nothing of importance could be done. But he was well prepared to gain his ends by

craft ; and indeed, he had orders for this purpose, dictated by the diplomacy of Schlippenbach.

First he made overtures to the nobility, promising, on behalf of the Swedish government, to increase still more their great privileges and prerogatives. When this move failed, he sent commissioners to the peasantry, promising them emancipation from serfdom and exemption from taxation, and even to give all the castles of their masters to their pillage. Even this attempt was wrecked upon the national hatred. Then Bertelsköld resorted to a new stratagem, bold, like everything he did. He pretended to be embittered against the Swedish government, which attempted to subdue the brave and honorable Lithuanian people, and used him as a tool for that purpose. He signified a desire to confer with the Lithuanian states as to the best means of effecting a reconciliation with them, and at the same time allowed it to appear that he might not be unwilling to betray the cause of his king and his countrymen, provided he could receive corresponding advantages in money and estates.

The Lithuanians were just at that season of the autumn holding a convention of the states in Vilna, where, with high oaths and adjurations, they bound themselves to exterminate the Swedes to the last man. Bertelsköld's propositions therefore met with but little attention at first, and were rather considered a sign of weakness and fear. But afterwards other thoughts arose. The rumors of the foreign chief's alliance with the devil had spread and awakened everywhere a superstitious fear. To be well rid of a man so dangerous was naturally thought desirable ; and besides, many of the nobility had another and a secret reason. They feared that their peasants, when the country was once cleared of the enemy, might ask to be rewarded for the blood they had shed, and endanger the power of the nobility. But if they came to an agreement with Bertelsköld, he, with his troops, might assist them in

holding the rebellious peasantry in check until everything was restored to the old order.

Bertelsköld occupied a well-fortified camp on the river Vilja, between Vilna and Kovno, fifteen or twenty miles from the former place, watching for an opportunity to take possession of this rich city. After much internal strife and discord amongst the Lithuanians, a meeting was at last arranged between the Swedish general and six of the highest magnates and prelates in order to agree upon the terms of reconciliation.

It was a warm and sunny day, although now late in September. Over a narrow point of the river was thrown a temporary bridge, on the middle of which a tent had been arranged for the meeting. Both parties —Bertelsköld on his side, and the Lithuanians on theirs—had bound themselves with a solemn sacramental oath to cease all hostilities for that day, and inviolably to permit each other to freely come and go. For further security, each party placed at its side of the bridge a guard of twelve men, armed alike. Opposite the Swedish camp, on the other side of the river, the Lithuanians had raised their tents, where, with songs and war-dances, they celebrated their expected speedy deliverance from the Swedish scourge.

An event which ought to have been foreseen had nearly broken up the meeting at the beginning. A rumor spread amongst the Finns and Livonians that their chief intended to betray the cause of the fatherland and sell them to the enemy. The discontent, at first subdued and spoken only in whispers, gradually grew louder and threatened to burst out into open revolt. The Swedish general saw the danger, and hastened to prevent it. Calling some of his leading officers to his tent, he confided to them his plans. Then these officers mingled with the soldiers and offered to be responsible with their heads for the honesty of the commander. The soldiers, enraged and suspicious, would

not listen to them, but seized their weapons, and threatened in their fury to slay all traitors. The revolt increased. Money was distributed, but without effect. They cried out that the general would first buy and then sell his men. The whole plan was almost spoiled in its very beginning. Bertelsköld was beside himself with anger. Then a youth, of noble figure and fine appearance, sprang upon one of the ramparts. The soldiers recognized Bernhard Bertelsköld, the youth with the black flashing eyes, beloved by all for his bravery, his amiability, and generosity.

"Comrades," cried he, in a voice at first trembling, but sonorous, "are there amongst you none who fought with my father at Breitenfeld, at Lech, and at Lützen?"

"Yes, yes!" sounded several voices in the crowd; for there were veterans who, like their general, had participated in hundreds of battles since 1630.

"Who is there, then, among you," continued the youth, his delicate cheek flushing with anger and excitement, "who is there, then, among you who dares to charge Count Gustaf Bertelsköld, my father, with ever having betrayed honor and fatherland? You should blush, comrades, that, misled by rumors and slanders, you have mistrusted your chief, who has served the Swedish crown honorably for twenty-six years, who has shared all your dangers, who has fought at your side, hungered and thirsted and suffered like the humblest of you. You dare to call such a man a traitor!"

The young man's words did not fail of effect. The men began to blush before this beardless boy, who thus reminded them of the duties and honor of a soldier.

"These are evil times," said some of them; "no one knows any longer whom to trust."

"My father is a man of faith and honor; he has promised you, as he has promised the enemy, that this negotiation shall be carried out with the greatest hon-

esty on both sides," exclaimed Count Bernhard, with fresh excitement. "You have heard him swear it, and whoever still dares to doubt his honor and his word, him I call a liar, and challenge him to fight me with whatever weapons he chooses, be he officer or soldier. In the field, every brave man is a nobleman. You are silent; is there no one among you who accepts my challenge?"

The soldiers remained silent. The language of conviction had impressed them and checked the revolt. They began to scatter about, and no longer refused the entertainment provided for them by their commander.

Count Bernhard descended from the rampart and went to his father in the tent.

"I have pledged my honor for you," said he, quietly, giving his father a strangely sad and piercing look.

"Go away; attend to your own duties, and do not trouble yourself about me until asked," replied the general, with a dark glance. "Enthusiast!" added he, in a gentler tone, "you are indeed always your mother's son!"

"What do you intend to do, father?"

"What I am ordered!" answered Count Bertelsköld.

The hour appointed for the meeting came. It was noon. The Lithuanians were the first to arrive, advancing to the bridge with much pomp. Their horses sparkled with gold-embroidered saddle-cloths, their Polish caps and ermine-lined coats shone with diamonds. Beside four bearded magnates with falchions, rode two bishops in long cloaks of velvet embroidered with silver and pearls, each of them bearing his crooked staff, inlaid with jewels and mother-of-pearl. These were the most distinguished, to whom the others reverently gave precedence.

When the brilliant cavalcade reached the bridge, the six ambassadors descended, leaving their horses to their richly equipped servants. Then the suite retired, the

six entered the tent, accompanied by an interpreter, and the Lithuanian guard of twelve men took their position at the end of the bridge, according to the agreement.

It seemed to be Bertelsköld's design to let them wait awhile for him, in order not to appear eager. Yet he dared not delay long, lest he should at the outset irritate his hot tempered enemies. At a quarter before one o'clock, he also arrived, accompanied by his son and four officers, all dressed, like himself, in unusually showy uniforms, that the enemy might not form a poor idea of the resources of the Swedes; although it is not improbable that the gold and precious stones which now adorned the dress of the frugal soldiers had been lately obtained by plundering the estates of Lithuanian noblemen. There were now seven in each party; for Bertelsköld also brought an interpreter.

They greeted each other reservedly and ceremoniously; then both parties laid aside their weapons at the tent-door, as a sign of the suspension of hostilities. The negotiations commenced.

The Lithuanians first presented their demands, which were purposely placed too high, so as to leave room for modification. The Swedes were to lay down their arms, give up their booty and their prisoners, surrender the fortresses, swear not to serve against his Polish majesty again during the war, and leave the country; in consideration of which they were promised safe retreat and an escort to the border. These were the chief points, and they were presented by the Lithuanians more as an act of grace than an agreement between equals.

Bertelsköld heard the long declaration patiently to the last word. Then, in answer, he presented his demands, which also were constructed upon no illiberal scale. The Lithuanians should disband their militia, deliver Vilna and other towns and fortresses into the hands of the Swedes as hostages, pay three thousand

ducats monthly for the maintenance of the Swedish army, and swear to commit no act of hostility toward the Swedes during the following eight months, which would be till spring. In return, Bertelsköld promised to maintain rigid discipline, to collect no war taxes, to protect persons and property, and procure favorable terms of peace from his Swedish majesty.

The amazement and rage of the Lithuanians are more easily to be imagined than described. They were scarcely able to control their anger till the interpreter had finished. Some of the more violent seized their weapons and showed an inclination to discontinue the meeting instantly ; but they were restrained by the prelates, who rightly guessed that Bertelsköld had presented these demands only for show and in order to secure his reputation in the eyes of his companions.

But it was not within the scope of the general's plan to calm the rising wrath of the Lithuanians. On the contrary, when the prelates had with great effort persuaded their countrymen to remain, the haughty commander added oil to the flames by presenting a new demand, more humiliating than the others; namely, that the Lithuanians should leave twelve of their most prominent and distinguished men as hostages for the exact fulfillment of the terms of the agreement.

Now the storm broke forth. Scarcely had the magnates received from the mouth of the interpreter the insulting proposals, when, flaming with anger, they seized their weapons, and, becoming still more enraged by the defiant composure of Bertelsköld, even unsheathed their sabres to hew down the arrogant foreigners on the spot.

This was exactly what Bertelsköld had expected. Scarcely was the first sword unsheathed, before the general drew from his belt a small whistle, and sounded it once, sharply and clearly. A second afterwards, a loud report was heard, followed by a mighty crash. The arch of the bridge beneath the tent swayed, and

seemed almost sinking ; a shower of splinters and stones fell upon the tent, penetrating it here and there, and striking the inmates, yet without serious injury to any one.

In their first amazement, the Lithuanians let their weapons fall. The superstitious belief in Bertelsköld's supernatural power paralyzed their courage. Only one of them hurried out, but stopped, as if petrified, at the entrance of the tent. One of the arches of the bridge nearest the Lithuanian shore had been blown up by a skillfully laid mine ; scarcely twelve feet from the tent yawned the river, swollen by the autumn rains, and all retreat in that direction was cut off. The greater part of the Lithuanian guard at the end of the bridge had been blown into the air with the arch.

Bertelsköld was not slow in taking advantage of the bewilderment of his enemies.

"Seize these traitors, who have broken the truce and drawn their weapons in the midst of a treaty!" exclaimed he. The order was executed almost without resistance. The Lithuanians were quickly seized, bound, and hurried to the Swedish camp.

But when Bertelsköld was leaving the tent, his son, Count Bernhard, placed himself in his way. The youth's cheeks were flushed with indignation.

"General," said he, "I demand a discharge instantly ; and if you refuse it, I will break my sword, throw the pieces at your feet, and say : 'Kill me, general, but force me no longer to serve a perjurer, even though he be my father.'"

Bertelsköld recoiled. After an apparently inward struggle, he answered, hesitatingly and almost gently : "I understand you, Bernhard, but you do not understand me. Go, calm yourself, and do not cause a scene ; time is precious ; later, I will explain all to you."

But Bernhard scarcely heard him ; he unsheathed his sword, threw it at the feet of the general, and exclaimed in a voice half stifled with tears : "I have

pledged my honor for you, father. Kill me, for you have disgraced your name and mine; henceforth I shall blush before every soldier, and every soldier will say to me: 'Go, you are a Bertelsköld, and a Bertelsköld has broken his oath!'"

At these words the general's cheek grew paler, his look darker than usual. "Arrest the boy," exclaimed he, "and place him where his folly will not spread a disturbance in the camp." The command was obeyed; the youth kept silent, with tearful eyes, and allowed himself to be led away.

"Have I time now for the scruples of a soft-hearted boy?" muttered the general, as if to convince himself of the necessity of his action. "Every man to his post!" added he, in a loud voice. "Forward the guns! Fire!"

From the hostile shore arose cries and an excitement that passed all bounds. Quickly a masked battery was uncovered on the Swedish shore, and a dozen cannon commenced to sweep the bewildered Lithuanians across the narrow river. Dances and merry games were ended hastily and in terror. The shore was strewn with dead. The Swedish army seized the opportunity and rushed against the enemy, partly by means of boats that had been held in readiness, partly over planks thrown across the half-destroyed bridge, and captured an immense booty and several hundred prisoners. Bertelsköld had for the second time inflicted upon the enemy a crushing defeat. The end will show whether he had not inflicted a worse one upon himself.

Bertelsköld's purpose was to conquer Vilna by a *coup-de-main*, before the enemy had recovered from his surprise. With this intention, he moved, without hesitation, his whole force over the river, and pursued the enemy. But for the first time in his life, he had miscalculated his good-fortune. It seemed as though from that moment it turned capriciously away from him.

When the artillery was crossing the hastily repaired bridge, the planks gave way beneath the weight. Four guns, with men and horses, were buried in the river; and a whole precious day elapsed before the others could be got over. Meanwhile the Finnish cavalry, believing it was supported by infantry and artillery, ventured as far as the gates of Vilna, and many of the troopers, reckless in the absence of the general, had scattered to plunder the surrounding regions. The Lithuanians, beside themselves with rage, gathered courage, collected again in troops of several thousands, slew every marauder that ventured out alone, and laid a trap for the rest. They succeeded but too well. The cavalry, about three hundred men, hard pressed from all sides, were forced to retreat, fell into the trap, were surprised in a forest pass, and almost annihilated. Nearly one hundred brave men fell under the pikes and sabres of the Lithuanians; the remainder were taken prisoners, and mostly executed; only twenty or thirty troopers succeeded in escaping, through circuitous ways, and rejoining the main force.

Bertelsköld swore vengeance. At length he crossed the river, and moved by forced marches against Vilna. In vain. He had lost the opportune moment. The enemy, outnumbering him tenfold, everywhere blocked his way. Three times Bertelsköld attacked, three times he was repulsed, each time with greater loss, and each time the courage of the enemy increased, while the Swedish soldiers lost their confidence in the good-fortune of their commander. No tactics, no strategy, no boldness, longer availed with the audacious chief; each new plan brought with it a new defeat. In less than six days the Swedish forces had melted to half; and the seventh day after the destruction of the bridge, Bertelsköld saw himself surrounded on all sides by infuriated enemies.

The situation was desperate. It was a distance of eighty miles to the nearest Swedish garrison; and

what use was there of attempting to force their way through, with the certain prospect of finding themselves in a few hours in the same situation, or one still worse?

The general mustered his brave but decimated ranks. No grumbling, no complaint was heard from the lips of the worn soldiers; but each eye was dull, each heart was hopeless. Bertelsköld tried to encourage them with words.

"Shall we fear these miserable peasant hordes, whom we have so often scattered like chaff over the field?" exclaimed he, with an affected reliance upon past victories.

"No, general," answered a gray veteran from the times of Gustaf Adolf. "We do not fear the enemy, but we fear God. We simple-minded soldiers do not understand human craftiness. But we have always heard it said that *false oaths destroy good-fortune.*"

Bertelsköld smiled peculiarly. "Yes, you are right," said he, coolly. "The enemy swore to keep the truce, and yet the villains drew their swords against us. From that we may conclude that God has given them into our hands, however much they exult over our apparent ruin."

At this moment there came a report that the enemy had broken through one of the outer entrenchments, and that the right wing of the little army was in danger. Bertelsköld threw himself on his horse and hastened thither. Scarcely had he repulsed the attack, before the same report came from the left wing. The general hurried there. Then came new reports. The main force was attacked in both front and rear. The danger was imminent. The enemy evidently acted according to a definite plan, and with the obvious design of assaulting simultaneously from all directions and annihilating the Swedish force.

Near the centre of the camp was a slight elevation upon which Bertelsköld had the night before built seven gallowses, which stood in plain view of the enemy.

He had reserved this last desperate expedient for the hour of need; and now it had surely come. More and more strongly did the enemy press forward, thinner and thinner grew the ranks of the defenders. The six Lithuanian prisoners and their interpreter were led to the hill in the festival dress which they had worn at the negotiations and which could be recognized at a long distance. A trumpeter was sent to the enemy, with the threat that if the Lithuanians did not suspend the attack and promise to negotiate on favorable terms, their six illustrious countrymen would in a few moments be hung before their eyes.

Either the trumpeter was unable to make himself understood, or the fury of the enemy disdained all negotiations; the assault continued, and grew more and more terrific. Already three of Bertelsköld's six earth-works were taken. . . . . The interpreter was swung upon the gallows; the enemy only stormed with increased fury. The greater part of the Finns, who, as usual, occupied the posts of danger, had fallen; a part of the Livonians threw away their arms, and commenced to plunder their own camp.

Bertelsköld now had some of the chief prisoners brought forward; the noose was placed around their necks; but the doomed men, seeing the progress of their countrymen, defiantly bade the Swedes to hasten, that they might themselves the sooner take their places on the gallows. Yet the death-act was not performed. Some of the Livonian and German officers, fearing they would be put to death without mercy if the prisoners were hanged, joined the soldiers in open revolt, stormed the hill, liberated the captives, and begged them to procure pardon for them from their countrymen. Bertelsköld's whole camp was breaking up; a part of the troops surrendered unconditionally, others were slain, others sought refuge in the forests, but were mostly recaptured and moistened field and hill with their brave and vainly-shed blood.

The general himself was one of the very few who escaped the massacre. The sinister and strange fortune which scattered misery and ruin everywhere about him, while it preserved himself, had once more, almost through a miracle, saved him from the complete destruction which overtook his men. Without a single wound, he had escaped death ; but what had he gained ? His army was annihilated, his son a prisoner ; the dream of Lithuania's grand-ducal crown had faded like a mist before his eyes. What answer could he give his king, when he should ask him : "General, what have you done with my brave men ?"

Yet — Bertelsköld wandered through the woods, like a spectre of fallen greatness, alone with his unenviable fortune ; and at last, after a hundred adventures, reached Poland and the Swedish garrisons.

CHAPTER IX.

SECOND LOVE.

AND now again enough of the fierce contests, the dark and bloody deeds, which glow upon the pictures of war like the reflection of distant fires upon the horizon of the night of the past. Why should bygone days be so filled with these tearful memories, which charm the beholder with their lustre, even while they appal him with their merciless cruelty ? They will certainly reappear in this story ; but now for a moment we will breathe amidst the flowers and fragrance of spring, and thus refresh the heart.

Upon a branch of the river Wieprz—one of those unchristian Polish names which no human tongue can utter—are still seen the ruins of Radzyn castle, whose

name at a later time was transferred to the town. The surrounding region, now a plain where the eye rests with delight on fertile grain fields, was at the time of our story covered with great forests of oak and beech, among which here and there an industrious hand had cleared a field for immediate need. The old aristocratic castle, surrounded by walls and ramparts, washed by the waters of the river, lifted its towers haughtily toward the sky, as though it would defy the lightning —an image of the power and arrogance of the Polish nobility of those days. For Poland was a country of a thousand petty sovereigns and millions of serfs ; and this overbearing aristocracy, pressing in both directions, had no government over it, no subjects under it.

It was early in the spring, in March, 1657. At that time exhausted Poland saw no enemy upon its soil ; yet the castle was guarded as in war times. Sentinels were stationed on ramparts, roads, and paths. Whenever a traveller approached, he was challenged and turned back. No stranger received admission to the castle ; the gates were closed, and the drawbridges raised. What was the reason of these extraordinary measures of precaution ?

There was an enemy who closed cabins and castles, who devastated villages and towns ; an enemy more dreaded than the Swedish arms, more ruinous and terrible than they ;—it was the plague.

But within the ramparts was a garden, quite small, as the space was limited, but densely blooming in the sun of early spring—a garden of perfume and of roses, where love had found a refuge and silent confidence a safe retreat. In this garden, in a bower of ivy and acacias, sat two young persons, conversing in the cool silence of the evening. One was the Princess Lodoiska, twenty years of age ; the other was Count Bernhard Bertelsköld, eighteen years old.

The princess was beautiful as a flame on a black ground, a spark lost in the embrace of a dark night.

The youth was beautiful, too; but as the wavering lustre upon a dark blue sky of stars. The nature of man and woman was changed in these two; she was the fiery longing, the violently passionate; he was the enthusiastic and gentle, the dreaming and renouncing. When he looked up at her, it was the glance of a star at night, when a veil of darkness falls gently upon the leaves of the grove; when she looked down at him, it was the insupportable glance of a burning sun in the *siesta* of the tropics.

For he sat at her feet, and toned in soft accord the strings of a cither; she sat on a grassy bank under the foliage of an oak, plucking with her right hand leaf after leaf of a drooping branch, while her left hand rested unconsciously, light as a thought, on the young man's locks.

"Sing me your mother's song once more," said the princess, winding about her left ring-finger one of the shining black locks which she held in her hand.

And Bernhard sang:

"So deep my smart,
Thus I impart
To thee, O Virgin, all my heart;
For honor dear
My soul's wish e'er
Is but to die without a fear."

As the strains ceased, he looked deeply into Lodoiska's eyes, but only for a moment, for immediately his glance fell to the earth, as though he had sought the holy virgin of the song and found only a beautiful demon. The princess observed his movement and expression, and smiled with the smile of the experienced coquette at the bashfulness of a young lover.

"Take care, Bernhard," said she. "You sing of the Holy Virgin as fervently as a Catholic. If your countrymen heard it, they would burn you at the stake."

Bernhard was silent. "And if I were a Catholic,

Lodoiska?" he answered abruptly, as the cither fell from his hand.

"Dreamer!" lisped the princess, "you have often told me that your mother had until her death a burning zeal for the Catholic faith. But you—you have preserved of her faith only the image of a Virgin."

"Lodoiska," interrupted Bernhard, "let us rather speak of you. How much do I not owe to you? It was you who with your father visited the prisons of Vilna and asked permission to attend the poor wounded prisoner at the very moment when he saw only certain death before him. It was you who took him to your castle, who healed his wounds, who gave him your generous heart, and who for his sake defied your father's severity. Why did you do all this? Why did you not let me die?"

"Why, you rogue? Because I saw you at the prison steps when hastening by in my father's carriage, loved you from the first moment I saw you, and since then could not live without you. And you ask why I did not let you die?"

"But, Lodoiska, your hand is no longer free. It belongs to a prince of the Radzivil family; if he saw me at your side, he would kill me."

"Bernhard—I love you."

"If your father knew it, his anger would know no bounds. He would imprison you within the walls of a convent, and let you slowly pine away in a life that is worse than death."

"Bernhard—I love you!"

"I am the enemy of your country; your whole nation hates my people, and the man who is the terror of Lithuania bears the name of Bertelsköld. To love a Bertelsköld is to be cursed by a million Poles."

"Bernhard—do you not hear?—I love you! What do I care for my promise, forced from me? What do I care for my stern father? What do I care for the curse of millions? Do you not yet understand that I

love you? There is a man whose rights are greater than his love; I know another, whose love might be greater than his rights—had he only courage."

"Ask for my life; it belongs to you!"

"Your life—yes, your entire life; but not your death, Bernhard! For your sake I would sacrifice everything—betrothed, family, and fatherland. Everything I give to you—everything; for I love you! Ask, and I will fulfill your demand. Command, and I will obey you. There is nothing in heaven or on earth that I could deny you—nothing, except yourself. For all that I forsake, I ask only a single reward, but a great, a precious reward;—I ask your entire life."

"I have said that it belongs to you!"

"Words born of the moment! Do you really know what you have said? You are eighteen. To-morrow maybe—in a year—in ten years—you will have forgotten that Lodoiska exists. Younger and lovelier women than I will enchain your heart;—for oh, you are so proud, so beautiful, why should not a hundred women strive to win you with all the snares of love? But I tell you, Bernhard, I will share with no one; I demand you entirely, unconditionally, and solely for myself. If you ever forget me, I will visit you, living or dead,—and say: 'Bernhard, I love you! remember, you are eternally mine!' There shall no night be dark enough, no place remote enough, to hide you from me. If you fly across the sea, I will follow you; if you hide yourself in the most impenetrable disguise, arm yourself in the iciest coldness, repulse me with the bitterest hatred, all will be in vain; I will follow you still, I will throw my arms around you, I will press my kisses on this noble forehead with its glossy locks, ... thus—and thus; . . . . and even if you were to plunge a dagger into my heart, yet you cannot escape me—I will come to you with my bleeding breast, with my unchanged and burning heart, and press again my pale lips to yours . . . thus . . . and

say to you, as now, eternally, inevitably, surely : 'Bernhard—I love you.'"

Again Bernhard ventured to raise a quick glance to those deep-black eyes, which, like two burning stars, observed and pierced him. But only for a moment could he bear their fervor ; his head sank once more into Lodoiska's lap, and he answered, almost shudderingly :

"What do you require of me ?"

"An oath that you will forever be mine !"

"Be careful, Lodoiska ! A double fate rests upon my family. There rests upon us a blessing, which brings constant good-fortune to ourselves, upon the single condition that we never swear false oaths ; for these destroy the good-fortune. But over us rests also a strange and dark curse, whose effect is that, while we ourselves constantly advance in power and honor, ill-fortune descends around us like a vulture upon its prey, ruining those who are dearest to us, and killing those who love us. No, dear Lodoiska, I cannot be so cruel as to bind your fate to mine. I will go away alone with my love ; for my love is deadly. I will love you so dearly that I will rejoice at your happiness in another's arms. . . . . Do you know, Lodoiska, that the highest, the purest love is the one which asks for nothing but the happiness of the loved one ?"

The princess arose quickly and contemptuously. "Oh, ye sons of the North !" said she, proudly, "how little do you understand what it means to love for life ! Because your bosoms are of snow and your hearts of ice, you think that all hearts should be satisfied with your faint and lukewarm love, which is nothing but a fire of straw, burning to-day, perished to-morrow, and without power to warm a single feeling into passion. Go, Count Bertelsköld, with your high and pure love, as you yourself call it, and which asks for nothing, but only commands—go, seek in your North a heart frozen and cold as yours ; persuade yourselves

that you love, poor fools ! although you only preach a heartless moral, and comfort yourselves with the thought that you have not imagined, not known, not deserved, that love which alone is worthy to be called the highest. Count, you are too insignificant for me, you are cowardly ! "

Bernhard sprang up, with glowing cheeks. " Princess ! " exclaimed he, looking straight and boldly into her black eyes, with a glance not less proud than hers, " weigh your words when you speak thus to a Finnish soldier ! There are expressions which are not to be borne even from the most beautiful lips. By heavens ! you rely too strongly upon being a woman—and a woman I love."

" I repeat it, Count Bernhard ! you are cowardly. You refuse to swear the oath I demand ; and I will tell you why you refuse. You understand that it would be a false oath, and you fear that it would ruin your good-fortune. By all the saints !—it is a double disgrace ; it is both faithlessness and cowardice. And I am a woman ;—you are right ; else you should not despise me and go unpunished. Go, sir ! go, go ! " exclaimed the passionate girl, whose anger was as unbounded as her love. " I have never loved you, I hate —I detest you ! "

And in the unmeasured violence of her anger, the princess sank down upon the grassy mound, leaned against the trunk of the oak, and began to weep as violently and unrestrainedly as a spoiled child whose whims are not gratified on the instant. Was it assumed or was it natural ? It is hard to say ; but what manly breast has not once been conquered by the tears of a beautiful woman ? Bernhard was so young, so inexperienced ; he did not understand the craftiness of love ; he only felt its benumbing, irresistible power ; he only realized that at his feet was a girl bathed in tears, and for his sake—for her boundless and self-sacrificing love for him who had just repulsed her—and it sufficed ; he

saw nothing else ; he threw himself on his knees before the weeping girl, he covered her hand with his kisses, he protested with a thousand oaths that in the whole wide world he loved her and her alone ;—and Lodoiska did not repulse him ; she enjoyed her triumph ; she let him entreat her long ; and when at last she turned her beautiful head from the tree, and again looked upon him with her dark eyes glowing with the fire that burns the heart to ashes, then there was scarcely needed a single drooping of the long dark eyelashes, or an inaudible entreaty from the lips' returning smile, before Bernhard exclaimed :

"Yes, I swear by my life's happiness, I swear by everything holy and dear to me, to love you only until death ; and if I break my oath, may you, living or dead, come to demand it from me ! "

"I receive your oath, and intend to keep it," answered Lodoiska, with glowing eyes. "Take in return my heart, for life and for eternity ! "

The sun had sunk behind the tops of the oaks ; the moonlight glimmered in the mirror of the silent stream; and still Bernhard's cither sounded at Lodoiska's feet, in the shadows of the garden. Happy ones !—they little knew that while love inhaled the fragrance of spring, danger fared through the gates of Radzyn castle.

Breathless rushed Lodoiska's most trusty servant into the garden. "The prince ! " exclaimed she ; and almost at the same instant the young prince Radzivil stood with drawn sword at the entrance to the arbor. Lodoiska threw herself in his way ; he pushed her fiercely back, disdaining to bestow upon her a single word.

"At last I find you, faithless son of a faithless father ! " exclaimed the prince, beside himself with anger.

Bernhard was scarcely allowed time to draw his sword ; for the prince, although otherwise a chivalrous

youth, observed the Spanish rule in such cases—not to fight, but to kill.

The swords crossed instantly in the uncertain moonlight. Chance or fortune decided the contest; the prince saw and heard nothing but his jealousy and his revenge. Hapless and brave youth! At the second or third pass his antagonist sprang quickly aside; Radzivil thrust his sword into the trunk of the oak, and at the same instant Bernhard's surer blade pierced his breast.

Radzivil fell in his blood, and Bernhard hastened to Lodoiska. "Fly! fly!" exclaimed she. "Here is the key to the back gate. Away—or my father will kill us both."

"And leave you to his vengeance? Never, never!" answered Bernhard, still bewildered by the heat of the combat; for at eighteen one does not kill a human being in cold blood.

"Will you then destroy us both?" whispered the princess. "Fly! when my father comes I will say that you tried to force from me the key to your liberty, and that the prince fell defending me. Farewell! we shall meet again! Remember your oath!"

And Bernhard, with beating heart, and Lodoiska's last kiss burning upon his lips, hurried away to liberty and new dangers.

CHAPTER X.

LITTLE BELT.

WEEKS and months have again passed, and we are now at the beginning of the eventful year 1658. The Swedish king's solid good-fortune had rolled onward like a swift ball, now through victories,

now through defeats,—now through brilliant prospects, and now through baffled hopes,—but always over devastated fields, over desolated cities and villages, through the smoking ruins of national prosperity, through the grim harvest of sword and pestilence, through blood, ashes, and tears. Of all the proud dreams of new crowns and kingdoms on the shores of Vistula, what now remained to the eager hand of ambition? The memory of martial exploits and deeds of violence, a few brilliant but bloody pages in the book of history, an enemy wearied unto death by measureless exertions and fatigues, and the impotence of their own country. Bitter lessons for the conqueror, eternal wisdom for the tyranny of the sword, which can only hew down the power of an enemy, but never build up a true one for itself!

And of the thousands of Swedes and Finns who marched out to conquer Poland, how many were left for future deeds, for their country's service, for their own happiness? Scarcely ten thousand men, reckless and defiant, who had learned, amidst constant battles, perils, ambuscades, plunderings, and beastly ravages, to despise the more tranquil charms of peace and all basis for human society except the iron discipline of war. These men—or the few among them who afterwards returned to their fatherland—with what emotions must they have contemplated the tranquillity of churches and grave-yards, such as they had profaned in hostile lands, the peaceful peasant cabins, such as they had burnt, the love of wives and daughters in which they had had so little share, the waving stalks of the corn-fields and the busy factories, such as they had plundered in wild rapacity? Some, the best among them, may at such a time have laid their hand upon their forehead, seeming to waken from an evil dream; but most of them retained their warlike habits, their violence and their rapacity, all their life long; and their native land has borne the bitter fruits. For a war which defends a

fatherland is a righteous war, ennobling a nation and quickening its powers; but a war undertaken for the conquest of foreign countries often becomes a tiger, that, eager for blood, ends by devouring its own young.

The eventful but ultimately disastrous war with Poland had gained for Charles Gustaf and Sweden three new enemies: Russia, Austria, and Denmark. Of these, the two first were held in check by small bodies of troops, while the king, bold as ever, sought his own salvation in the destruction of Denmark. He therefore abandoned the Prince of Siebenbürgen, Ragoczi, allied with whom he had, as late as the spring of 1657, ravaged and devastated Poland, proceeded with the small remnant of his army to Prussia, and then, later in the summer, when the Danes had thoughtlessly declared war, to Pomerania. The king and Otto Stenbock were able to bring to the waiting Wrangel only six to eight thousand men—veteran soldiers, tried in a hundred dangers, invincible in courage and firm in discipline, one of those armies which crush tenfold resistance and seem able to defy fate itself. From Pomerania, the king, with thirteen thousand men, forced his way through Mecklenburg into Holstein, took breath at Hamburg's walls, and then marched by Torstenson's old route, up through Jutland.

The king's good-fortune was irresistible. On the twenty-third of July, he broke into Holstein. At the end of August he had conquered this whole province, Schleswig, and the southern part of Jutland, and crowded the remnants of the Danish forces together within the fortress of Frederiksodde—which afterwards became Fredericia, and in later times became so famous through the brilliant victory of the Danes over the Schleswig-Holsteiners. At that time, 1657, Fredericia was less fortunate; the strong and well-equipped fortress, with a garrison of five thousand men, fell, on the morning of the twenty-fourth of October, before an audacious attack by Wrangel, with three thousand of

the men who had conquered Poland. The Danes were panic-stricken. Charles Gustaf began to dream of the conquest of all Denmark.

From Fredericia to Middelfart, opposite, on the coast of Funen, is scarcely a mile, across the narrowest part of Little Belt. During the winter of 1643 and 1644, Torstenson had conceived the bold plan of marching across the frozen Belt to Zealand; but fate had reserved this honor for his pupil, and the plan was abandoned, as the winter was mild and the waves of the Belt continued to flow. Charles Gustaf's venturesome spirit seized upon the plan, and resolved to put it in execution. Denmark should fall; and Sweden, threatened from all sides by embittered enemies, should emerge from its expected destruction with victory and extension of territory.

Before reaching these great events, we shall be obliged to stop for a moment in the vicinity of Kolding, three miles southwest of Fredericia, where we meet again two of the chief personages of this story.

It was in the afternoon of the twenty-sixth of January, 1658. Almost the entire Swedish army was concentrated in and around the small village of Heilse, north of the town of Kolding—itself so celebrated one hundred and ninety years afterwards. The king marshalled his troops on the hard-frozen and snow-covered fields. His humor was that day none of the best, for a decided thaw had again broken up some of the ice whose frail bridge was to bear his army and his good-fortune against Copenhagen. He was severe in his inspection, and dropped sharp words, which both high and low in the army had to bear.

The king, accompanied by Wrangel, Dahlberg, and a few other of his bravest officers, suddenly checked his horse in front of one of the regiments lately ordered thither from Pomerania. Its uniforms were worn, its appearance scarcely in full parade order, but its bearing firm as a wall. Every man, with his scarred, fierce,

weather-beaten countenance, looked calmly and steadily into the face of the king; not a feature changed, not a movement failed in promptness and decision; these soldiers were of that tried and tempered kind who never tremble, not even before the glances of an angry king. Charles Gustaf's hard features brightened; he turned to Wrangel and said: "Look at those fellows, and tell me no more that there is a sea between me and Copenhagen."

Wrangel, who had steadily opposed the expedition across the Belt, replied gruffly: "In order to drive the Jutlanders into the sea with these fellows, your majesty need not jump into the puddle yourself."

The king, without heeding him, beckoned a tall officer from the regiment.

"Are these your men, Count Bertelsköld?"

"Yes, your majesty," answered the count, saluting proudly.

"We met last in Prussia," continued the king, with a darkening face. "General, what have you done with my brave soldiers in Lithuania?"

"My duty," answered Bertelsköld, shortly.

"And it was you who thought yourself able to command good-fortune?"

"Your majesty has proved that good-fortune attends the brave. I have been so bold as to follow your majesty's high example. I have lost Lithuania, as your majesty has lost Poland; but, in the track of your majesty, I have swept Pomerania, Bremen, and Verden, and had the good fortune to be victor in a hundred skirmishes while your majesty has been victor in battles."

"Count, you speak boldy. How will you prove your presumption of good-fortune?"

"By riding first over the ice of the Belt."

The king smiled, and turned to Wrangel. "That man is of the stock with which to thrash the Jutlanders. I need such men . . . ."

"Foolhardy fellow!" muttered Wrangel.

"Well, Count Bertelsköld," continued the king, "I will believe you, if to-morrow you ride across the Belt and before night bring me a prisoner from Funen."

"It shall be done, your majesty," answered Bertelsköld, in short and measured tones, and undisturbed by Wrangel's sarcastic smile; for nobody was ignorant of the fact that the ice of the eastern part of Little Belt had broken up, and the bay near Middelfart consequently rendered impassable. But the king's mind was turned so longingly in that direction that everything which flattered his hopes was seized upon with the greatest eagerness. Perhaps there was also a certain similarity of temperament which moved him to listen to Bertelsköld's boldness with secret pleasure; at least it is certain that he himself, like this spoiled favorite of fortune, was fond of venturing everything on a single card, to win or lose.

The review was ended; the king rode away, and the troops separated to their quarters, to warm their stiffened limbs. The barracks could not contain all at once; fires were kindled in the fields, and the canteen went its rounds amongst the soldiers who for the time could find no roof to cover their heads. Other soldiers came flocking thither. Finally they took possession of the church. War and the cold season respected nothing. The soldiers were seen lying with their bottles in the aisles of the church and around the altar, and wild and ribald songs sounded within the walls which lately echoed to the tones of sacred hymns.

Charles Gustaf had his headquarters in the parsonage, from the windows of which he had an open view over the coast and the ice beyond. From time to time the king interrupted his deliberations with his officers, went impatiently to the window, and looked at the darkening surroundings, where it was still possible to distinguish in the distance the blue open channel near the shore of Funen. The thermometer had not yet been

invented. But the cloudy sky and the appearance of the snow sufficiently indicated to him that the thaw still continued to mock his expectations.

Suddenly the king broke off a conversation with Dahlberg, and sent for Bertelsköld. "Count," said he gruffly, "tell me frankly and without fear: are you in league with the devil? Do not be afraid; I will give you absolution."

"I do not understand your majesty."

"I wish to learn from you the art of riding across the open sea to Middelfart."

"Nothing is easier. Will your majesty be pleased to cast a glance through the window?"

The king looked out. The sky, lately covered with clouds, had quickly cleared, and everything betokened a severe cold—which indeed came the same night. Charles Gustaf clapped Bertelsköld lightly upon the shoulder.

"Count," said he, "the news is worth a parish in Finland, if you accomplish what you have undertaken."

"It shall be done, your majesty."

When, on the following morning, the sun arose over the leafless beeches of Funen, the entire Little Belt glittered with the lustre of new ice. The Swedes flocked to the shore, to persuade themselves of the power of the winter night to build bridges, and of the favor of fortune in building them at just the right moment. The king was in a good humor. All the three crowns of the North seemed to him to glitter in the horizon.

The cold continued to be extremely severe. Already, in the morning, the ice was strong enough to bear footmen. Toward night, Bertelsköld began his bold attempt. He laid aside his heavy armor, and put on a light jacket. Instead of the large brown horse he generally rode, he chose a small and lean but sinewy runner of the Öland breed. Two attendants, on skates, followed him, each pushing a sledge before him. Then

the expedition set off, in view of almost the entire Swedish army.

At first, where the ice was stronger, Bertelsköld rode very slowly, in order not to fatigue his small Ölander. But the nearer he approached to the more dangerous part of the Belt—the channel—the more he increased his speed, so that the attendants, on their light skates, had hard work to keep up with him. Nearer and nearer drew the snow-covered coast of Funen; the ice cracked and bent under the horse's feet; again and again a hoof struck through the clear thin ice, spattering the water high into the air. But the audacious soldier dashed onward, with quickened speed. A moment more, and Bertelsköld stood safe on Funen, and at the same instant his horse fell, never to rise again.

The sun went down, frosty and yellow, behind the coast of Schleswig, and the early winter twilight began to darken. Time was precious.

Bertelsköld had landed near a village, south of Middelfart. A crowd of Danes, men, women, and children, had collected upon the beach, curious to know what the adventurous rider had to tell. Probably they considered him a messenger from the Swedish king. No one divined the real cause of this unusual visit.

Bertelsköld looked behind him; the attendants with the sledges were still a good distance away. He approached the crowd, inquiring here and there for the road to Odense, letting them understand that he was sent to make peace. The news filled all with joy. They crowded innocently around the stranger near the ice. Just then, according to previous orders, one of the attendants arrived, left his sledge and an extra pair of skates which he had carried with him, and immediately started on his return.

Bertelsköld inquired if it were possible to reach Middelfart across the ice; meanwhile fastening on the skates. The peasants, in their joy, offered to lend him a horse in place of the one that had fallen. Every-

thing seemed friendly and well. . . . . Then Bertelsköld suddenly seized a boy of five years around the waist, threw him into the sledge, pushed it out before him on the ice, and hastened on his light skates with the speed of the wind, away with his booty. It was all done in a moment.

The peasants, amazed and benumbed, scarcely believed their own eyes, before they heard the shrieks of the boy, already far out on the ice. A woman rushed forward . . . . she was the mother of the captured boy; she tore her hair, and was the first to leap after them on the ice; she slipped, fell, rose again, fell once more, rose for the second time, and leaped after the robber till she sank down fainting. Some young men followed her example. In vain; the robber was already out of sight in the increasing twilight, and it was impossible to overtake him. With rage and curses at the faithlessness of the Swedes, the pursuers returned with the unhappy mother.

Meanwhile Bertelsköld, with the boy in the sledge, reached the opposite shore in safety. The rays of the rising moon had favored his perilous journey. On the Swedish side he was already given up as lost. Darker grew the twilight, and darker grew the king. He repented his foolhardiness; he needed so urgently every brave arm; and what was most important of all, the whole army would foresee its own fate in Bertelsköld's, whether success or defeat, if the proposed expedition were attempted.

But Bertelsköld came.

"I have ridden across the Belt, your majesty, although I have returned on skates. Here is my living witness from Funen."

And the captured boy was brought forward, with his nose red from the cold, and munching a piece of wheat bread which had been given him to stop his crying.

The king unfastened from his neck a gold chain, to

which was attached a medallion, set with jewels, and containing the portrait of Queen Christina.

"General," said he, "take this as a souvenir of your exploit. Hereafter you shall wear the escutcheon of Funen in your coat-of-arms. And hereafter," the king added, with proud confidence, "we will visit our brother Frederick in Copenhagen."

"And hereafter," whispered Dahlberg to Klas Tott, "Bertelsköld will get another parish in Finland to despoil."

"Yes," answered Tott, in the same tone, "supposing there is still a parish in Finland to give away; I doubt it."

That night the soldiers were treated to extra fare, and the officers as well. It is known that Charles Gustaf was as great a champion at a drinking-feast as in a battle. His wild soldier habits had been acquired partly in the Thirty Years' War, when wine flowed in streams not less than blood, and partly in the silent period of longing and ambition, when, in voluntary exile at Öland, he secretly sighed for the crown of Sweden. Many a time—and latest during his career of murder, fire, and pillage, in Poland, in the company of Ragoczi—the king had been carried undressed to bed; yet he was always seen the following morning, as usual, working zealously. And now flowed also the noble Rhine wine, plundered from the cellars of the rich castles of Holstein and Schleswig, and the example of the king was followed by most of his commanders. All around, in the officers' quarters, the goblets were drained to the destruction of Denmark; and often was Bertelsköld named, as the first man who had proven the possibility of riding across the Belt.

Not far from the parsonage, ten or twelve of the higher officers, not included among the king's most confidential friends, were seated around a well-spread table in a spacious peasant cabin. Stories and wine enlivened hearts and tongues. It was really a great,

an eventful occasion. The ancient enemy, often conquered but as often feared, Denmark, always waiting lurkingly for Sweden's downfall, was at last to be crushed and humbled; Shonen, Halland, Blekinge, Norway, were to be snatched from it, and joined to Sweden; it might even be that Denmark's last hour as an independent country was already striking; Jutland and the islands should be made Swedish provinces, Copenhagen an humble and subdued city; the soldiers of Charles Gustaf should be presented with the estates of the Danish nobility, and return home with princely riches. What glory! What gains! And—what an occasion for emptying again and again the brimming goblets!

Heated by wine, all gave free expression to their feelings. The old Swedish nobility hated the parvenus of their circle, whom the lavish favor of Queen Christina had raised to titles and riches. One of the latter was Bertelsköld; he had often been obliged to hear such things said; and he heard them now. Sten Bjelke, with the blood of many centuries' ancestry in his veins, struck his goblet so violently against Bertelsköld's that half the wine was spilled, and cried out, so loudly that all heard it: "Does the devil ride you, little Count of Little Belt, that you drink nothing! Do you think we are drinking salt water?"

Bertelsköld emptied his goblet without replying.

"That man," continued Bjelke, turning to the others, "that man has been feasting upon root-crops in Funen to-day. He was raised upon roots. He is used to planting cabbages . . . ."

"And to cutting them off when they become impertinent," replied Bertelsköld, who had inherited his father's fiery temper.

"Oh, see how proud he is—the Belt-Count!" continued Bjelke, in the same tone. "Do you know how he comes by that? Why, his grandfather had the title

and dignity of peasant-king, and reigned over fifty marshes and stone-heaps somewhere up in Finland."

"Count!" burst out Bertelsköld, excitedly.

"And his mother," continued Bjelke, in the same tone, "his mother, gentlemen, was a princess who tended sheep in the forest. Therefore . . . ."

Bjelke did not reach the end of his speech, before Bertelsköld's gauntlet struck him full in the forehead. Flushing with rage, the proud nobleman sprang to his feet and quickly drew his sword. In the same moment, Bertelsköld had drawn his.

The injury on the one side and the insult on the other were so public that those present did not even attempt to prevent the fight. They limited their action to regulating it according to the laws of chivalry regarding duels; the table was moved away, more candles were lighted, and seconds were appointed. In fifteen minutes everything was in readiness for one of those bloody interludes which were so frequent in that war, and which not even the near presence of the king was able to prevent. For when the question was one of honor, the nobility of that time did not yield to the royal power itself.

Both champions were excellent and experienced swordsmen, both fiery-tempered, both embittered by old enmity. The spectators awaited, with the air of connoisseurs, a delightful evening's amusement; and they were not disappointed. Although the ceiling was so low that the points of the swords slashed furrows in it, the duel was fought on both sides with equal prowess, if not with equal fortune. Bertelsköld's blade had several times reached his antagonist; Bjelke was bleeding from three or four slight wounds, without succeeding in giving his enemy a single scratch. Worn out and bleeding, he asked for three minutes' suspension of the fight. It was granted.

"I call you to witness, gentlemen," exclaimed Bjelke, "that this wretch is invulnerable through sor-

cery. Never since the battle of Nördlingen has he received a single scratch; and everyone knows the reason. He wears on his left ring-finger the ring of King Gustaf Adolf; he relies upon its power; it is only thus that he dare fight with an honest cavalier."

These words did not fail of effect upon the general superstition.

"Count," said one of the oldest officers, "we are Christian soldiers, and do not allow any deviltry among us. A word is as good as an oath; tell us that all the stories about your ring are idle talk, and we will believe you as if you had sworn it."

Bertelsköld hesitated for a moment . . . . but his anger and the temptation were too great;—he yielded.

"It is true," he said, "that I wear a ring in memory of the great king, but all that Bjelke and the others say about it is ridiculous superstition."

"Then let the fight begin again!"

And the fight was renewed; but the protecting angel had fled from Bertelsköld's side. In the first onset Bjelke's sword cleaved his left hand, and the two last fingers fell to the floor. A dark mist swam before the eyes of the wounded man; the sword fell from his hand; and only the prompt assistance of those present prevented him from sinking at the feet of his victorious adversary.

One of the officers picked up the amputated fingers, and drew from one of them a small copper ring.

"Can this be the famous ring?" asked he.

Those around him laughed.

"It is not even of gold," said they. "It cannot possibly be the right one."

The questioner threw away the finger and the ring in contempt.

Heathenism in the human heart! Is it then impossible to uproot it? We are born and reared in the belief in an eternal providence which shapes our ends with unerring justice; and yet we constantly return to

the belief in the blind fate of the past, the capricious and unreasoning power which dispenses woe and weal with equal hate and eagerness, and both so undeserved. And it is through our belief in it that this unconscionable power gains dominion over us ; the gambler loses when he distrusts his fortune, and the sailor is wrecked when he predicts his own destruction.

Bertelsköld, the intrepid soldier, had, through the long-continued favor of fortune, become its slave. In the moment when Bjelke's sword cleaved his left hand, his proud faith was cloven like an oak splintered by the lightning. He fainted not by reason of the wound and pain ; he fainted at the consciousness of the sudden downfall of his own fortune.

A night and a day passed. The cold continued to strengthen the ice bridges, and the entire Swedish camp was in the greatest activity. The sight stirred the courage of the soldiers. Hardened by toils and dangers, Bertelsköld soon conquered the first pain. With bandaged hand, and weak from loss of blood, he yet refused to remain inactive. He, the first man who had ridden across the Belt, would not be the last in the victorious march.

But in the evening before the decisive day, he sent for his son Bernhard, whom ever since the occurrences in Lithuania he had repulsed with a severity almost like that of the peasant king. The blind belief that his good-fortune was now in its downfall, had again obtained possession of the soldier's mind.

Bernhard Bertelsköld found his father, the general, absorbed in the contemplation of a portrait set in a medallion. Was it the picture of Queen Christina, which he had so lately received from the flattering favor of a king? No ; it was the image of a beautiful black-haired and black-eyed woman from the banks of the Main ; it was the image of the dreamy and lovely Regina von Emmeritz.

The eyes of the general were moist with tears. As

far back as he could remember, he had wept but once before ; it was at the death of his mother, Meri. When he lost his wife, the comfort of tears had refused their solace to the sorrowing man.

Bernhard was of a different temperament. The tears in the eyes of his father quickly caused his own to flow. The general seized his hand—and the reconciliation between father and son was completed without a word.

"This was your mother," said Bertelsköld, in a voice of unusual tenderness. "My son, if you should ever happen to love a woman, do not bind her to you with ties that are indissoluble. To be united to us is to be united to misfortune. The curse of Aaron Bertila follows us."

"But the blessing of a mother follows in its track and breaks the point of the thorn of curses," answered Bernhard. "You have told me so, my father. It is your mother's ring you wear."

"No, no !" replied Bertelsköld, earnestly. "I wear it no longer ; it is lost, and my good-fortune with it. My mother told me it would be so, and now I know she spoke the truth. With that ring go prosperity in peace and victory in war, love, honor, and riches ; whoever wears it shall possess all the good-fortune in the world, and have only himself to conquer ; but he himself will be the enemy of his own happiness. False oaths and family feuds, arrogance and immoderate ambition, shall unceasingly work within his breast to compass his fall. . . . . Bernhard, my son, the ring was cut off, with the finger, at the moment when I was weak enough to deny its power. . . . . I beg you to seek for it no more, but to be content with a quieter happiness, which bears no curse in its bosom. . . . . Take warning from me. I have been the enemy of my own good-fortune, a rebel against myself, against the highest and holiest. . . . . I have sworn a false oath, my son; therefore I shall die to-morrow."

"You, who have triumphed over so many dangers?"

"That was when I had within me the certainty of victory. Now I have within me the certainty of destruction. Listen to me, Bernhard. I leave to you my estates—my poor, starving, and oppressed tenantry. Be to them a father, more than I have been. At Majniemi lives a widow; you know her—Black Jane. She is the only person living who knows the place where a great treasure is buried. Tears and blood cling to this treasure, for it is a booty from fierce conflicts in Bohemia. Find this treasure; for from the first it was mine; rebuild with it the ruined cabins, better than before; till the wild land; enclose the neglected fields; let this treasure wash out with tears of gratitude its guilt of blood."

"I promise you, my father. But . . . . "

"Farewell, my son! We shall see each other again to-morrow; and afterwards . . . . with your mother!"

Bernhard embraced his father; the tender youth wept like a child. Then he withdrew with hasty steps.

The morning of the twenty-ninth of January dawned. The cold was more severe than ever. At daybreak the whole army was at the shore ready for the start. The ice had been tested, and found strong. Yet the cautious Dahlberg did not trust it fully. On the places which were most dangerous by reason of the current, he had spread straw, poured upon it water, which immediately froze, and laid down planks. The ever-memorable expedition, sung a hundred years later by Gyllenborg, was begun.

The cavalry and the cannon started first, from Heilse, over the small isle of Brandsö, toward a bay on the coast of Funen, south of Iversnæs. Then came the right wing, under Wrangel and Tott; next the left wing, under the king and Berends. The infantry marched north of the other forces. It was a strange march over the wide blue ice . . . . silent, earnest, as if crossing an open grave. When they approached the

channel, the troops dismounted and led their horses by the reins, a little apart from each other. But once past this dangerous spot, they threw themselves into their saddles and rushed with loud cheers against the enemy waiting on the coast.

About four thousand Danish soldiers, fifteen hundred peasants at work sawing the ice, and several thousand spectators, stood upon the coast of Funen, praying fervently that the Swedish army might sink, like Pharaoh of old, into the depths of the sea. But the Swedes came safely over, with their superior force. . . . . A sharp attack of the mail-clad horsemen, and the disheartened Danish soldiers were overwhelmed and many of them taken prisoners.

Charles Gustaf, who followed, saw the contest, but not the sudden victory of his men.

"Follow me!" he exclaimed, and with his wing made a *détour* to the right, in order to land at another point and attack the Danes in the rear. The whole wing rushed thither.

"Take care, Bertelsköld!" cried Dahlberg, to the general, who, with his left arm in a sling, hurried by, galloping at the head of his troops; "go slowly! separate your men; you are riding too close together."

But Bertelsköld was conscious only of the distant coast and of new exploits there under the eyes of the king. With closed ranks, the two foremost squadrons dashed forward over the channel, when quickly the frail bridge cracked, burst with a terrible report, and the proud on-rushing squadrons sank. So suddenly, so unexpectedly, amidst their cheers, came their destruction, that horses and men were seen only for a moment struggling with the rising waves, before they were all carried away by the current and disappeared in the depths. Both squadrons were lost beyond rescue; the carriages of the king and the French ambassador, with their horses, shared the fate of the horsemen.

Charles Gustaf saw his men perish before his eyes, and he could not help them. The crown of Denmark beckoned again . . . . the king looked away from the open blue grave, made his *détour*, and reached land in safety, with the rest of his wing. Here the battle was already ended; Funen was conquered; Zealand trembled, and King Frederick sent messenger after messenger to ask for peace, for the old kingdom of Denmark tottered under his feet.

But the Swedish lion accomplished his leap. Dahlberg strove zealously therefor; though Wrangel, and the traitor Corfitz Ulfeld, at that time cowardly, were eager to oppose it. After some uncertainty, the king resolved to adopt Dahlberg's boldly laid plans. The sixth of February, before daybreak, the cavalry moved forward from Svendborg, over the island Taasinge to Langeland. "It was a sad and gloomy march," says Fryxell; "by the tramping of the horses, the snow on the ice was melted, so that the way resembled an open stream. Through this the soldiers were obliged to wade in water almost a foot deep, fearing every moment to feel the frail ice break under their feet; some lost their way bewildered, and disappeared in the depths."

But resistless as an avalanche, the force swept on, from Langeland to Laaland, from Laaland to Falster, from Falster to Zealand. The faithless sea betrayed its own children, the lovely Danish islands, and carried, like another Ulfeld, the enemy willingly on its back. The twelfth of February, 1658, the Swedish army landed on the coast of Zealand, near Vordingborg. The heroic achievement was ready to be engraven forever in the memories of the centuries; the peace at Roskilde was its result, Shonen, Halland, and Blekinge its most precious gain.

King Charles Gustaf had not the respect of the great Gustaf Adolf for human life. When he looked back upon what this expedition had cost him, and what he

had gained by it, he thought within himself: "Denmark I took at a low price."

The young Count Bernhard Bertelsköld once stood near the king, and looked out upon the sea with tearful eyes. Then the king again thought within himself: "Bertelsköld was a brave soldier . . . . the few hundred drowned horsemen were also brave fellows . . . . but yet I took Denmark at a low price."

Ah, but he did not take it.

Often afterwards did Charles Gustaf survey the waves of the Belt with feelings of pride. What remained to conquer for him who had conquered the whole world?

To conquer himself.

Charles Gustaf could not conquer himself. It was the hero's human weakness and his human fall.

PART II.—THE WITCH.

INTERLUDE.

"NO, cousin, no," exclaimed the old grandmother, in that peculiarly decided tone which was so becoming to her, and which could be so sharp when once she was thoroughly in earnest, but was now used only in play, as the old lady could never persuade herself to look upon the Surgeon's stories seriously,—"no, cousin, don't come here and tell us that the elder Bertelsköld became something so different from what he might have been and decently ought to have been I ask, is that right! He was a promising young fellow when we first met him at the battle of Breitenfeld—somewhat easy, somewhat shy, as became his age; but still sensitive, agreeable, and full of life—I concede that—but not at all wild. Who could have believed that he would change into such a hard nature, such a complete monster, as your General Bertelsköld? It is unwarrantable, cousin; and I must tell you that if you let Bernhard Bertelsköld, who is still young and good, become in time like his father, then I don't want to hear anything more about him; he will have no further interest for me."

The old grandmother had warmed a little with these words—as she did for everything which she thought true and right in this world—and the result was, as usual, that the young people about her remained as silent as the walls; for they respected the old lady, with all her easy ways. Anne Sophie continued to pick over the berries with an expression which she might have worn in church; possibly it was because

her betrothed had gone away in the autumn to Lübeck to buy some trifles for her. Cousin Svanholm abstractedly took out his box of Copenhagen tobacco, and Cousin Svenonius had got hold of a sheet of paper and was cutting it up into little boxes for the children.

"My dear cousin," replied the Surgeon, very mildly, "permit me to ask: how do you think the hero in a romance ought to end?"

"Romances and dramas ought to end with a marriage; it is a proper and honorable ending; besides, it is pleasing to the listener to know that his friends are in safety, having finally got all they sought. Everything that is told beyond that, is unnecessary, and should have been omitted; although I admit that I can bear some little addition—as, for instance, that the young couple, after many years, are surrounded by children and grandchildren, a whole roomfull. But sad endings to books are abominable, and ought to be forbidden by the censor. How should the hero of a romance end? Indeed, as I just said, cousin, he should end as a married man."

"You may be perfectly right in that, cousin; a hero of a romance certainly acts sensibly in ending in such a way. But my Bertelsklölds—excuse me, cousin!—are no romantic heroes of the style of Lafontaine; that would have caused me much trouble, since I have wished to bring them up as human beings like ourselves: all the more so because they have something like a touch of historic reality. Be so kind as to look back a little at Bertelsköld. From the very beginning, the seed of ambition swelled within him, and that seed had a rich soil in the bloody field of the Thirty Years' War. But ambition bears within it the germ of selfishness, and when this germ is permitted to grow unchecked under the influence of hot battles, in which each one's concern must be first of all to protect himself, then the result is such a character as Gustaf Bertelsköld. Do not say that this character is inconsistent with itself:

on the contrary, it is more consistent than either you or I would have wished. You seem to think I have a right to fashion my heroes as I please—just as Anne Sophie amuses herself by making of the same dough sometimes biscuits, sometimes cookies . . . . "

Anne Sophie twitched the Surgeon's coat, for she saw that grandma did not fancy that comparison.

"Yes, yes," continued Bäck, soothingly, "I know very well, cousin, that you distinguish between cookies and human dispositions. But the first duty of a story-teller is to be accurate, measuring his sketches by the scale of inner truth; and so he has no right to let a human being be anything else than what he must have become as a product of natural disposition and the influences of his life. Now it might be possible to believe that if Bertelsköld had been brought up with the Storkyro peasant king, his grandfather, instead of being sent to Stockholm to be the companion of young noblemen, and from there to the war, or even if in his years of manhood he had been allowed to sit quietly in domestic comfort at Majniemi, then the gentler traits of his character might have had opportunity to develop instead of hard-hearted ambition, and he might have become quite another man than the one he was. But to this it can only be answered that had not 'if' existed then the old granny had . . . . yes, yes, cousin; don't be angry; but so it really is. And consider also the influence of constant good-fortune upon a character which has never been counterbalanced in firm principles, and you will find that I am right."

"Well, let the elder Bertelsköld be as he is," replied the old grandmother, only half convinced; "but promise not to make, in the same way, a hard-hearted tyrant of the young Bernhard. I should feel sorry for the boy; he is a little frivolous, perhaps, but so far as I can see, good-hearted, and much better than his father."

"Then I should promise more than I could fulfil,"

replied Bäck, doubtfully. "You must remember, cousin, that the blessing of a mother and the curse of a grandfather strive for the fate of the Bertelsköld family; it remains to be seen which shall get the upper hand. We left off at the point when General Bertelsköld had finished his life *rôle*. His son Bernhard was as yet quite young—about eighteen; and to be fatherless at that age, and enter into the possession of large estates, especially in a turbulent time, involves great dangers and temptations. For it is the nature of fortune, that if she gives much she asks much in return; and you will remember that pride and ambition were destined to be the constant enemies of the Bertelskölds' good-fortune."

"*Rex regi rebellis*—or, better, *in regem*," joined in Svenonius, with an air of great profundity.

"I cannot stand such nonsense," interrupted, in his turn, Captain Svanholm, whose martial visage had long betrayed anger and impatience. "*Rex* here and *rex* there! What!—by a thousand barrels of devils!—shall we bone the soul of a brave soldier, as we bone a herring! Let the Bertelskölds be as our Lord made them: a little proud perhaps—but who the devil does that hurt? The main thing is that they are sturdy fellows, real rousers, who beat the enemy black and blue, and thus do honor to the Swedish and Finnish name. I remember yet how, at Karstula, when we had got well under fire . . . ."

"Then you were glad to get well out again, brother," interrupted the immovable Svenonius.

The bearded lips of the captain parted for an answer, which would scarcely have been of the mildest, when the old grandmother hastened to avert the storm.

"I am sure," she said, "that our cousin Bäck has much more to tell us than about the Bertelskölds only. We are peaceful burgher folks, and cannot endure the company of great people, or their war-clatter, very long at a time. I am anxious to learn something about the

merry Larsson and his buxom wife, of whom we have not heard for a long time; I hope they are alive and well."

"And I," exclaimed Anne Sophie, "would like dearly to hear something more about little Greta at Majniemi. If she is really so much attached to Bernhard Bertelsköld as there is reason to believe, then I pity her. To love such a butterfly-count . . . . no, then . . . . " Anne Sophie was silent.

"Then you would prefer a trusty young man of the burgher class, you mean to say," interrupted the Surgeon. "Yes, it is all well enough," added he, in a more serious tone; "I do not hate the nobility, as I show by including them so often in my stories, especially as their history is so closely blended with that of the country, and never so closely as in the seventeenth century. I even claim that the nobility of that period, at least in Sweden and Finland, was the material of which history is made. But as both my birth and my life have inspired me with an equal friendship for the common people, I must confess that it is wrong to let them be overshadowed in history by the great. Reflect, for example, that the greater part of our most esteemed middle class in Finland traces its origin to men who achieved honor and a name in the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. I doubt even if any of the learned gentlemen at the academy will rap me over the knuckles for admitting that Finnish history ever since the great war period has derived most of its material from this middle class of commoners. Therefore," and the Surgeon turned to the grandmother, "you must kindly excuse it, cousin, if, while we are still in the seventeenth century, I show something like a predilection for the nobility, in permitting them to stand a little more in the foreground of the picture. When we have once—if our Lord gives us health—toiled through the centuries as far down as the eighteenth, the relation will no doubt be

reversed. At least, it has always appeared to me that the Finnish ecclesiastical and commercial families must have a remarkable little history of their own—remarkable just because it weaves together, in long and strong threads, a new burgher aristocracy."

"You speak in riddles, cousin!"

"The future always speaks in riddles. Remember that we are still in the middle of the seventeenth century."

"What more have you to tell us of it?"

"Infinitely much, and yet infinitely little in comparison with the present century's wealth of material, of the greatest interest to memory and to reflection. We live now in orderly and enlightened times, when all things go their regulated way on roads which society has carefully laid out, when the authority of the law is recognized by all, and prejudices, although working secretly, no longer stalk with defiant forehead into God's sunlight, threatening with sword and stake those who do not abjure their conviction. It may prove beneficial to us to look once more into the inner workings of another period, when some things were better, but, in truth, much more was worse than now."

"That is impossible, cousin. The good old times were far better than ours."

"We shall see," said the Surgeon. "Now I will commence my next story."

CHAPTER I.

KING CHARLES'S HUNT

THIRTEEN years have again passed since we saw Charles Gustaf at the height of his prosperity, and Count Gustaf Bertelsköld buried in the waves of Little Belt. Gone is the glittering illusion of the military glory of the Pfaltz-king ; fortune had at last abandoned her audacious favorite ; no bullet had shortened his adventurous career ; quiet death on a sick-bed had surprised him in the midst of new and far-reaching plans for the dominion of the North ;—he fell like a sword, broken in its scabbard, just at the moment when it was expected to be seen flashing anew over the heads of the enemy. And after the great victories bought with the blood of the people, after the brilliant conquests won by such marvellous efforts, exhaustion claimed its rights : the nerves of the body politic grew numb with weakness ; its resources, too severely drained, seemed almost dried up ; and the fields, grown wild again, the deserted and impoverished towns, the empty public treasuries, all seemed to accuse Charles Gustaf's insatiable desire for war as the cause of the common ruin.

Sweden, in its European significance as a power of the first rank, was a low-statured youth clad in the armor of a giant and made proud by a giant's achievements. The youth had lived too fast, his strength seemed exhausted, and the weight of the armor pressed him often to the ground. But the memory of victories is a great inheritance ; when a nation bears within its bosom the proud consciousness of being one of the foremost and bravest of the earth, then it forgets for a

time its flowing blood, its wasted sinews ; its muscles hold their tension, its hand still clasps the hilt of the sword of victory ; and it dies not—it still lives, still struggles, still conquers, still hopes for a future of honor to be born of a past of glory. It is the power and greatness of an idea which holds people erect.

But the material foundation—the body which serves as the instrument of this great soul—must be provided for and spared. Without Charles XI, Swedish greatness would, long before Poltava, have found in a battle-field its tomb and monument. It may be that this king was far from being as wise a statesman as has been represented—that he, in contrast to his father, the hero and adventurer, undervalued the power of ideas and overestimated the benefits of political economy ; yet it was through him that Sweden, even fifty years after the death of Charles X, weighed so heavily in the scale of Europe. "His Reduction prepared the way for the loss of the Baltic provinces," says Fryxell ; yes, but his internal legislation developed new and rich resources, sufficient for a hundred years, if his son had not squandered them in twenty.

When Charles Gustaf fell, as though stricken by lightning, in the midst of his career, Sweden looked about her for a king, and found that her crown was worn by a four years' child. A regency of twelve years was no happy period ; it should have been a time of calm after the storm, a season of rest from strife and bloodshed ; but instead, it became a time of dissension amongst the great and of oppression to the humble—a time of greedy private plundering and of neglect of the common weal. The nobility seemed almost to reach the aim toward which it had striven under Queen Christina, and which Charles Gustaf turned aside but did not destroy. Sweden was an oligarchy, a dominion of a few men, where a few great families sapped the vital forces of the state.

Finland had bled deeply in the great foreign wars ;

Karelen had been devastated and large regions abandoned since 1656. Everything was prostrate—everything save the patient courage of the people. The few years of the government of Pehr Brahe had vanished like a day of blue sky amidst dark clouds. Scarcely had it passed, before the reign of disorder began anew. A portion of the nobility consumed, beyond the limits of their country, the immense treasures of their estates; another part pursued their ravages at home, like the ride of the wild huntsman through the stormy autumn night. The stewards extorted the last penny of the peasants; iniquity wrote out the sentences of the law; the harsh voice of brutality was heard even in the churches; while the dogmatists had in their fanaticism driven Terserus from his bishop's chair, superstition raised its head higher than ever; sinister and crazy witch-trials raged like a plague in all minds and in all courts. But through these dark times glowed two imperishable lights, the eternal glory of this period and the dawn of a better future: the Finnish Bible and the Finnish University.

Oh, how he was longed for, the young King Charles XI, who was now to seize the reins of government—which, as a fine author says, "hitherto had been dragged through the mud." Many thousand eyes looked up to him, in the oppression of the times, as to an angel in need. He was young, and youth has always a heart; so from him might be expected a heart for the misery of the country.

Our story will linger for a moment upon the days when he for the first time, still a minor, trod the soil of Finland: perhaps not strictly Finland, for the soil was then more Swedish than Finnish; but a later time has called it Finnish, and Nature, which has placed these islands as outposts at the western limits of the country, has confirmed the title.

The sea has many daughters upon Finland's coast, many defiant amazons who offer their granite bosoms

to the waves, many lovely children in green robes of waving birch and alder. But foremost of them all is the rock-girt virgin at the extreme southwest, the daughter of three seas, the verdant Åland.

The far-driven waves of the Bothnian Gulf storm with the north wind against its strand; the southeast wind drives the billows of the Finnish Bay against its rocks, and the south wind throws the mighty water masses of the entire Baltic foaming against its coast; while an arm of this last-mentioned sea, Åland's own bay, with the west wind of summer tries its strength against the immovable walls of granite.

Åland numbers more than eighty inhabited islands, besides innumerable rocks and uninhabitable reefs, where sometimes the boat of the fisherman anchors, and the solitary swan spreads her white wings in spring-time. The soil is often hard and scanty; the rock yields no bread, the sand no pasture, but the sea is all the more bountiful, and on these strands dwells a hardy race of fishermen and seamen.

In the middle of this group of islands and holms, Åland proper, with its churches and villages, towers before the eye of the seafarer. At the time of our story it was less peopled and less cultivated than now. Dense forests, which the axe had not ventured to touch, spread over the larger part of the island, and in these forests grazed the noblest deer of the North, the elk. For the largest part of the island belonged to the royal domain of Kastelholm, whose ruins are still mirrored in a small bay of the sea, and its forests were hunting-grounds protected by law, where no one but the governor of the castle and the king had any right to hunt. So rigorous were the hunting-laws, that even according to the ordinance of the mild King Gustaf Adolf, dated the second of August 1620, "any person who slew an elk at Åland should be punished with death," but if, through some especial grace, he should be pardoned, all his property was forfeited to the crown, and he himself

transported to Ingermanland, "without hope of release in his whole lifetime." This ordinance, so far as is known, has never been applied in its full severity, but punishments by exile, the gauntlet, and hard work on the fortresses, have been inflicted for the killing of elks. Later times have fallen into the opposite mistake. The noble and beautiful animals have been barbarously persecuted without any protection, and entirely destroyed by the hunter's bullets.

When the voyager from Åbo passes Skiflet, then Delet, leaving Bomarsund fortress to the right and Lumparland and Lemland to the left, he enters a broad bay, rapidly narrowing, upon whose shore is seen the pointed cross-crowned spire of Sund church, the largest in Åland, and not far from it the ruins of Kastelholm.

On the thirty-first of August, 1671, this whole region was in the liveliest commotion, for no less a guest than King Charles XI himself was expected, accompanied by the princesses and a part of the court. Happy lot, thus to come, a king to his people, beloved and longed-for ere he yet was known! But with him came Sweden's and Finland's future; and that sufficed.

The day had been stormy and rainy: the elements do not flatter the mighty of earth. But toward evening the sky cleared, the storm ceased, the billows sank peacefully to rest, and the flush of sunset colored bays and belts with glimmering shades. The Ålanders —those who had anything to reap—had forgotten their harvest, the fisherman had forgotten his net, the herdsman his flocks. All had streamed down to the beach to await the king; for already—two or three days before—some of the court attendants had arrived to bespeak rooms and service for the royal party, partly at the parsonage of Sund, partly of the steward, who inhabited a new wooden building close by the largest and best-furnished peasant houses.

At about five o'clock in the afternoon, the proud royal frigate "Iris" was seen from the outer coast,

majestically cleaving the salt waves, and, guided by the most experienced pilots of the region, cautiously approaching the bay at Sund. Two pretty pleasure-yachts, called "Castor" and "Pollux," built for the pleasure of the king—for Charles XI was in his youth a bold sailor as well as a fearless rider—tacked in coquettish circles, now ahead of the frigate, now by her side, the latter vessel carrying but little sail, in order not to venture a too hasty acquaintance with the ground of Åland. Many supposed that the king himself was on board one of the yachts, and had left to ladies and timid courtiers the securer deck of the frigate; but it was not so—although the desire had not been lacking. For the king's tutor, the stiff pedant Krister Horn, had entered on the voyage with excessive loyal zeal, and the young monarch, although impatient under this control, had yielded to Horn's dutiful request that his majesty would during the storm preserve his precious life on board the frigate.

At eight o'clock in the evening the "Iris" cast anchor in the glittering bay, and the royal persons and court attendants embarked, some in the yachts and some in lighter boats, for the shore. A great shout of exultation from the multitude greeted the arrival of the king on Åland's soil.

From the spot where they landed, it was a distance of about a mile to the parsonage. As the soil was wet with the rain, the noble guests could not walk, and there were no other vehicles at Åland than heavy four-wheeled peasant wagons. What was to be done? For the king, the queen, and the highest of the court ladies, horses stood ready, brought from Stockholm for the purpose; but most of the other fine gentlemen and ladies of the court had to choose between two hard alternatives: either to tramp through the mud, or to climb upon the backs of fat peasant horses, covered with home-spun woollen blankets. Some chose one way, some the other; there was both mirth and dis-

content; but this amused the king much. It must be added that the road to the parsonage was strewn with juniper branches and fresh birch leaves, which diffused a pleasant odor in the cool evening air.

Then the brilliant procession started; it consisted of about one hundred persons, including the servants. Here was seen the young king, with his long, pretty, curly hair, his small, lively eyes, his elkskin jacket, his large sword, and more youthful than royal bearing; the queen dowager Hedvig Eleonora, with her plump figure and burgher appearance; the Princess Juliana, the king's beautiful and afterwards unpleasantly famous cousin, at that time only nineteen years of age, and in the eyes of many the future Queen of Sweden. There was seen her rival in beauty, Stina Wrangel, court lady of the queen; there were the councillors of state, Krister Horn and Johan Gyllenstjerna, political enemies and rivals in power; there too the master of horse, Mårten Reutercrantz, the courtier Gustaf Gyllenstjerna, and many of the younger companions of the king—butterflies who already commenced to swarm in the rays of the rising sun. With the exception of the king, whose dress was the simplest of them all, the greater part of his suite appeared in that lavish pomp which signalized the Regency—now in its decline, but not yet reformed by the severe economy of Charles XI.

The crowd at the landing had formed itself into two lines, between which the court attendants hurried officiously in advance of the royal party, now thrusting back rebukingly some impertinent boy, now silencing some garrulous old woman who loudly expressed her admiration of the unheard-of pomp. Between these two lines the royal party and the court now passed—the king saluting the people on either side—the high-born ladies glad to have escaped the perils of the sea—the young noblemen glancing haughtily and contemptuously at the crowd, or here and there condescending to nod to the prettiest peasant girls.

A head taller than all the others, a handsome nobleman of about thirty years went in the king's suite. According to the fashion of the time, his long black hair fell in curls around his shoulders : a fashion foretelling the long wigs just then making their appearance. His features were manly and noble, rather gentle than defiantly commanding ; a glance of his dark eyes passed over the crowd with a peculiar expression of mildness and amiability. A wide travelling-cloak covered his shoulders and prevented the spectators from seeing whether the dress were civil or military ; a hat with a broad brim pinned up with an agraffe of jewels, shaded a part of the face and of the black locks.

"Oh, look at him!" exclaimed, rather loudly, one of the nearest peasant girls, a lovely little lass, whose clear blue eyes were opened wide with curiosity. "Do you know, Anne, that is certainly the king himself—for that is the way a king ought to look."

"How do you know, Lisa?" answered her neighbor, another blooming dark-haired girl, whose glad and open countenance was radiant with health and innocence. "You never saw a king before."

"As if I would not know!" replied the first, with *naive* self-confidence. "Tall as a pine, beautiful as a spring morning, and gentle as a summer night,—that is the way a king ought to look ; I have heard so of the poultry-woman at the parsonage, who in her youth was at the court and took charge of Queen Kerstin's chickens."

"What are you lasses chattering about?" cried a red-faced fisherwoman who had forced herself into the crowd with fresh flounders in her basket, hoping to get royally paid for them. "Don't you understand that the king is walking on ahead—he with the high-born air and majestic bearing?" and she pointed to Krister Horn.

"Mercy! to look so old, and only be sixteen!" exclaimed Lisa's neighbor, with childish surprise.

"Well, well!" muttered the old woman. "Would it be strange if a king had wrinkles in the cradle?"

"Surely it would be strange," answered the girl, innocently.

"You speak according to your understanding," replied Krister Horn's admirer, oracularly, putting an end to the girl's conjectures.

But a fourth person had, like them, followed with her eyes the tall nobleman in the cloak and jewelled hat, and in her cheeks alternated the color of red berries and of white winter snow. It was the young minister's wife from Saltvik (where at that time was a chapel), who had come to the town for marketing, and remained till the arrival of the royal party. Who would have recognized in her the gentle daughter of the stern Master Adam, the fairest flower of Majniemi—she who six years ago had given her hand to the student Johannes, when he at last, after many years' toil and cathedral-fights, had risen to an appointment as chaplain far away on Åland's rocks? Anyone who had looked upon her then would easily have seen that her heart mourned a lost dream of youth; but now years had passed, her cheeks had regained their fulness, heart and spirit had recovered the health which is the reward of confidence in God and of honest struggles; all was well again: the past was like a beautiful and far-off dream—when suddenly a single look tore open the healed wounds of the heart and made them bleed again, only for a moment, but oh, so deeply! For the young woman whispered, in a tone scarcely audible to herself: "It is he—it is Bernhard—Bernhard Bertelsköld! And he did not see me! He did not know me!"

But Bertelsköld continued with the rest on his way to the parsonage, where a table was set for the king and as many of the most prominent personages as could find room, while the rest separated to their previously appointed abodes. There was plenty of cere-

mony—we can be sure of that! Down at the beach the vicar and his wife, bowing to the ground, had received the high guests; and Krister Horn, the former carouser, who had now become so extravagantly grand, took great care that the observances of rank were scrupulously followed. Next to the royal family walked counts and barons, while the lower nobility rather sullenly saw themselves, as usual, thrust aside by the arrogance of those having titles, and swore within themselves to wrest the power from their hated hands at the first opportunity. But the young king endured this stiff ceremony with contempt and impatience. He had hoped here, in the lap of nature, to be permitted for once to rejoice in his human right of being young and free; but his hope was disappointed, through his mother's apprehensions and his tutor's suspicious Argus eyes. Who can wonder that the king longed for the moment when, upon the fields of Åland, he might "govern his fiery horse"—and, as was added, to himself, by the future autocrat, "govern myself, my land—is that not best?"

The following day—the first of September—the weather was again bad; the rain poured in torrents; none of the ladies, and only a few of the courtiers, ventured out of doors. Inside the parsonage the air was sultry and oppressive; the rooms were small, the guests numerous, and the queen not in the best of humors. The vicar and his wife, who had moved out into a cottage near the parsonage, were honored by being invited to dine at their own table, which the chief cook of the court had abundantly supplied with appetizing dishes. Hedvig Eleonora fared very well, even when journeying. The dinner was eaten in the sight of many people who had gathered in the yard and could easily look through the low windows and see everything going on inside.

Towards night, as the rain continued, all kinds of games were played by the court people, and, for variety,

some peasant girls were taken into this fine company, where their embarrassment afforded no little diversion. Unfortunately, the room was too small for dancing. And, unfortunately too, there was so much haughtiness in certain quarters that they could not amuse themselves as they would have liked.

"But where is his majesty?" asked the courtiers among themselves; and many of the maidens silently asked the same.

"He is hunting," was the answer.

"In this pouring rain?"

"Yes, certainly."

Even kings love liberty. What did Sweden's young monarch care for a wet cloak or mudded chamois boots, when it was a question of enjoyment in forgetting for an entire day the royal crown? With his equerry, Reutercrantz, and the venturesome Gustaf Gyllenstjerna, at that time his nearest friends, Charles XI roamed from morning till evening through the forest, his gun upon his shoulder, his bugle-horn at his breast, his spurs in his horse's flanks, and then, "Hullo—hoa!" over rocks and hills, over hedges and fences, without mercy for horses or men. Any regular hunting was not to be thought of that day; they shot anything within range—now a crow, now a squirrel, now a wood-cock, now a rabbit, now—to speak the truth—a peaceful ram or a bearded goat which innocently yawned at the galloping horsemen: though for this the owner afterwards received double compensation. To ride was the principal thing that day; everything else was insignificant; and dripping with rain, the horsemen sought a remote fisherman's hut, where they enjoyed fresh herring and Åland cheese. So the high-born mad-caps roved all day through the forest; and toward night the king, sure of reproofs, avoided returning to the parsonage. Instead, he spent the night near Kastelholm, where a party of young noblemen had collected around the goblets and the dice; and late in the evening a

brief message informed the anxious queen that his majesty was well and would return the next day, if the weather was pleasant.

"Ah!" sighed the queen, "Count Horn, Count Horn, what do you think of Sweden's future?"

And Count Horn dutifully shook his head, in loyal sympathy. Neither he nor his mistress divined that the royal hunter, now so wild, would in future times spend sixteen hours a day at his desk, and be the most industrious worker, and the man most unsparing of himself, in his whole kingdom.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRINCESS AND THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

THE second of September was a Sunday. The skies continued to look down upon the royal hunt with weeping eyes. But not even the brightest sun would that day have been dangerous to the peace of the forest denizens. Lutheranism, lately emerged from the heat of conflict, was still so ardent and fervent, the religious requirements of the time were still so rigid, that neither the frivolous jugglery of Christina, the wild soldier life of Charles X, nor the aristocratic vanity and emptiness of the Regency, had been able to strip off the outer husks when free-thinking and voluptuousness had worm-eaten the kernel inside. Whenever the court appeared in public, if only on a hunt, none of its members dared to neglect the Sunday service. The king presented himself early in the morning at the parsonage, not without traces of a wakeful night; the motherly admonition did not fail to come, but it was heard with patience. His comrades from Kastelholm

exchanged side-glances with Horn; but it went no further.

It scarcely need be said that the minister's sermon in Sund church that day was long and profound, and interlarded with illustrations from the Old Testament —not omitting Nimrod, who was a hunter before the Lord. That day the church beadle did not need to poke sleeping old women in the neck with his rod; if the spirit of devotion was not so absorbing, curiosity was all the stronger. The king put ten ducats into the collection-bag; the queen added five, and the court gave in proportion.

Toward evening the sky cleared, and the young people of the court grew eager for the long-delayed sports; the king, by permission of his tutor, arranged a shooting-match. High in the top of a slender swaying pole was fastened a fluttering dove, at which the best marksmen tried their aim. Several hundred spectators were gathered around; each missing shot elicited the jeers and laughter of the court ladies, and each falling dove was greeted with the cheers of the crowd—especially when the shot was the king's.

On the third of September, the real hunt began. The day was magnificent and mild; no envious clouds longer darkened King Charles's chase. The whole brilliant company, some on horseback, some on foot, some in wagons, started for the forests near the limits of Saltvik. On a lovely hill, surrounded by oaks, lindens, and birches, were pitched twelve tents—the two that were designed for the use of the royal family being made one of red velvet, the other of white silk; and from the top of each the blue-yellow flag waved high in air.

Halloo!—now the pack was unleashed—Holsteinish dogs of the noblest breed, imported for the king's pleasure by Count De la Gardie. The king and seven or eight of the best riders mounted their horses, the other huntsmen took their assigned positions, while the

ladies rambled about among the wooded hills, in merry games and frolics.

Only one of them dared to follow the chase on horseback ; and she was the Princess Juliana. Indeed, firm reins and a steady courage were needed for such a ride. Often the forest was so dense, and the thicket of junipers and willows so high, that the horses refused to enter, but wheeled about at full speed and galloped away to more open regions, when they heard the well-known baying of the dogs. Sometimes it happened that the turf suddenly yielded under the horses' hoofs, or a treacherous fen lurked beneath an insidious covering of grass, or that they brought up unexpectedly at the edge of a morass above whose marshy surface small oases, crowned with osiers, offered here and there a precarious footing. Or again the horsemen hewed their way with their swords through a dense thicket of alders, hoping behind it to find their prey, but seeing instead the wide sea shining at their feet, and dashing its rolling breakers upon the pebbles.

The Princess Juliana was one of the foremost and most daring of the riders. Bushes and trees had no respect for the king's cousin. The pine stretched out its bushy branches and took off, in her stooping career, her coquettish hat, with its rose-colored ostrich-plume ; the spruce did its best to glue fast with its sticky gum her long close-fitting riding-habit of black velvet ; the aspens sprinkled her with their white down ; the swelling juniper-bushes caught at her small gold-trimmed riding-boots in passing ; the uprooted fir, a century old, placed itself in her way ; precipices and marshes all lay in wait for the beautiful and daring rider. But she sped forward like a Valkyria, with cheeks glowing and dark locks flying, magnificent and proud to see ; nothing checked her, nothing daunted her—least of all the fact that she was ruining her costly dress, which was already doomed to destruction ; all the ladies of the court, and most of the gentlemen, every evening after

a hunt in the forest, gave their entire dress to the servants, and put on a new one the next morning, to give it away again at night in the same manner.

Everything would have resulted finely, if only the elks had been so polite as to let themselves be shot. It is well known that this fleet-footed animal is hunted to the best advantage in the winter season, when the frozen crust of snow breaks beneath its feet, and the hunter, on light snow-shoes, reaches its breast with javelin or bullet. In summer, the elk, which then easily runs twenty miles an hour, is difficult to overtake. The swiftest dog is unable to keep up with him. The royal hunting party experienced this fact. Accustomed to grazing undisturbed in their native forests, the noble animals were frightened by the clamor, never before heard in their peaceful haunts ; the sound of the bugle-horn, the barking of the dogs, the neighing of the horses, the cries of the huntsmen, echoing through the forest in all directions, filled the elk with fear, and whole droves of them were seen in the distance, hurrying away with the speed of the wind. In vain did the dogs put forth their utmost strength to maintain their old reputation as the terror of the forest ; one after another they came panting back with protruding tongue, or were found "dead from zeal" at some brookside where they had tried to slake their thirst. In vain the hunters spurred their horses—*galop ventre à terre*—across marshes or through forest thickets ; the persecuted deer found their well-known paths where nobody dared or was able to follow. In vain were strong nets stretched across narrow places or open passes where the deer must go ; they plunged into the sea and swam by ; they threw themselves into the thicket and forced their way through. The hunters were beside themselves with eagerness and vexation ; twice had the king's horse sunk in the marsh and been got out with difficulty ; twice had Reutercrantz, the most skilful rider in the kingdom of Sweden, been swept off his

horse by low-hanging branches; as yet they had not wounded, far less killed, a single elk.

Toward night, the chase was obliged to cease, owing to the weariness of the hunters, the horses, and the dogs. The king called before him the German deer-keepers, who were expressly appointed, and broke out into some rather harsh words at their negligence in not having more effectually hindered the elks' flight. The keepers answered bluntly, that if his majesty would return in February or March, they could surely promise a better result.

Meanwhile, as the evening was fine and balmy, the noble party resolved to remain over-night in the tents. Only the queen took up her lodgings in a newly-built cottage, and spent the evening in playing cards with Horn and a few of her court ladies. The weakness of Hedvig Eleonora for this game was so well-known that jesters said, not without allusion to the extravagance of the time, that the queen and the five regents played for the revenues of the kingdom.

The following day was bright and clear, and the chase was resumed upon a larger scale. The party now advanced far into the territory of Saltvik, where the ground was, if possible, still more rugged, but the flight of the elks was thereby made more difficult. The king, with that persistency afterwards so well known, had resolved upon driving the elks, by an uninterrupted chain of hunters, to the outermost points of Åland, and there have a grand massacre. Fortunately, he abandoned this plan when it was represented to him that the elks, driven to close quarters, would trample down and destroy the newly-sown rye-fields. The hunters therefore contented themselves with a guerrilla warfare, hoping to surround and slay the proud animals one by one.

They succeeded better that day. The first elk fell near Saltvik parsonage, by the ball of Princess Juliana. A general jubilation saluted her success and daring.

Only the king's humor darkened; still more reckless, he spurred his horse over rocks and precipices; he had caught sight of a magnificent elk, which seemed to limp, having sprained its hoof among the stones; fainter and fainter grew its motions; it was driven towards the beach, where its flight was barred. The dogs rushed forward; the elk stopped short, turned round, and with the resignation of despair awaited its pursuers. It is well known that these noble animals, when they see death inevitable, gaze at the hunter with an expression so piteous, so almost humanely sad, that the hardest heart might be softened by it. But the king neither heard nor saw anything but the long-sought prey; he checked his horse, he aimed . . . . . then a shot from an unknown hand resounded from the thicket, and the proud elk fell in its blood, killed by a strange bullet, at the very moment when the king felt sure of the honor of being its slayer.

The sixteen-years-old hunter flushed with anger. The forest was searched through—no tracks were found. The chase must be commenced again—for the royal hunter neither could nor would return without some trophy secured by his own hand.

Meanwhile the princess, emboldened by her success, had determined, at whatever cost, to slay another elk. Following the cry of the hounds, she proceeded farther and farther from the rest of the party, whose horses were already tired out. Her large Holsteinish steed galloped over bushes and hedges, with lifted ears and distended nostrils; . . . . more and more violent became the barking, wilder and wilder the ride; . . . . the princess found herself on a slight elevation, covered with slender firs, and in the vale below her the fleeing elk pursued its way. The bold rider resolved to intercept its flight, and spurred her horse down the hill, slippery from the rain. The Holsteiner obeyed the

spur, dared the attempt, but stumbled, and fell at headlong speed, with his royal burden.

A solitary horseman had followed this rash rider at some distance, and now hurried to her aid. The princess lay in a swoon at the foot of a fir; the noble Holsteiner lay dying, with crushed ribs, at her side. The horseman lifted the princess in his arms, carried her to a spring, and bathed her head with the cool water. After a while she opened her beautiful eyes and gazed at her rescuer with an indescribable expression.

"Is it you, Bertelsköld?" whispered she. "It is well; now let me die."

"No," answered Bernhard Bertelsköld—for it was he. "The future Queen of Sweden has a higher destiny. Will your highness do me the honor to ride my horse? I will lead him to the parsonage, which is near by."

The princess did not answer . . . . she held fast his hand, which he tried to withdraw. The barking of the dogs had died away; the chase had taken another direction; and far around in the lonely forest were heard only the purling of the spring and the gentle breaking of the sea against the distant shore.

Conflicting emotions struggled for the mastery in Bertelsköld's breast.

"Your highness," resumed he, "live for a grand future, live for the most glorious crown of the North. The king, my master, will miss you, and be anxious for your safety. Come let us seek a better protector for you."

The princess responded to his exhortation with an expression of pain and anger.

"The king!" she exclaimed, "what does he care for me—that emotionless boy, who has a soul only for soldiers and horses? Sweden's crown!—what do I care for that, when my heart is broken? . . . . . Bernhard," continued she, with glowing ardor, "I know

that I shall die, and then it will not matter what they say of me. I will die—with you!" . . . .

He was kneeling at her side—he, the handsomest knight at the court of Charles XI—and she pressed his hand against her violently beating heart, and his long black locks mingled with her brown curls. But it was only for a few moments. Without answering, Count Bernhard again lifted his royal charge and carried her to his waiting horse. Carefully he raised himself in the saddle, with the princess in his arms, and turned toward the parsonage, about a mile and a half distant. Neither of them spoke a word.

But there was nobody at home in the parsonage. Everyone, both large and small, had gone to witness the royal chase. Only a half-grown girl sat rocking a child in a cradle.

Count Bernhard entered, supporting the trembling princess. Saltvik parsonage, like most other parsonages of that period, was no better nor larger than a common peasant house in our time. From the little hallway one entered a room with a large fire-place—the main apartment, and beyond it a small chamber. This was all. But a careful and gentle hand had dispensed comfort and neatness around this humble dwelling. Everything was simple and yet inviting; the floor was strewn with fine juniper leaves; the walls were of rough fir, bare, but of a polished whiteness; the cooking utensils were brightly scoured; even the bowls and dishes of the milk-shelf peeped forth appetizingly neat. The small windows had curtains of fine linen—for cotton was at that time still a luxury; in the chamber were seen a writing-desk and a book-shelf; in all the windows stood mignonettes, gilliflowers, and pinks. Everywhere appeared traces of the good spirit that dwelt within these rooms and impressed upon their walls the stamp of its gentle presence.

Count Bernhard conducted the princess into the little chamber, pressed her hand to his lips, and said:

"Your highness, you are ill; the severe fall has hurt you. Rest here for a few moments, while I hasten to inform the king of your mishap, and send your ladies to take care of you."

"Bernhard," whispered the princess, in a faint voice, "do not leave me; it is perhaps the last time we shall meet thus. Say that I am ill, that I am mad—say what you will—but do not leave me. You do not know what I suffer, amongst all these intrigues, in the midst of this heartless web of policy, which has selected me as the tool of its self-interest. Hated by some and flattered by others, I have no real friend—no one who loves me with an undivided heart. The queen, who ought to be a mother to me, is hard and cold; she is whimsical about her country-mansions; she is meditating upon her son; she loves me less than a stone palace. Once she dared say to me: 'Juliana, take warning from your mother's example!' Oh, the hateful creature!—daring to speak thus of my mother! You only, Count Bernhard, have shown me friendship and sympathy—I have read it in your eyes; our souls have long understood each other, although duty has sealed your lips. Well—I release you from this duty;—I do not love the king, I shall never be his—do you hear?—never!"

And the glowing maiden looked again at her rescuer with eyes whose fervor mirrored a soul of passions dissolved into a single longing.

But Count Bernhard was now a man; he did not yield hastily to the most dangerous temptation that had assailed him in a life-time so filled with such dangers. Again he raised the pretty hand to his lips, and said:

"Your highness, you are Princess Juliana, the king's cousin and his future wife. I am only a subject, whose duty is to honor you, to pity you, and to keep forever within my heart the memory of your kindness. Farewell!"

For a moment the princess was silent. Then she

said, coldly and haughtily: "I thank you, count, for your zeal. Go and call my court ladies; I will await them here."

Bertelsköld went away, and soon after the hoof-beats of his horse were heard galloping rapidly away from the parsonage. But now, when she was once more alone, the princess' short-lived pride broke into a flood of tears, as violent and unrestrained as can come only from a despised love at the age of seventeen. The pain from her fall, till now suppressed, returned with double violence; she threw herself on a bed, a burning fever raged in all her veins; there was a singing in her ears, her consciousness left her, and a wild delirium betrayed her lips into the uttering of words which should have been heard by no one save him who so lately had courage to disregard them.

Not long after the count's departure, the lovely hostess, the minister's young wife, entered the room, and in her train followed no less than four boys, her sons, all vociferous and greatly excited by the unusual spectacle of the royal hunt. The princess' laid-off riding-cloak was the first sight that met the eye of the young mother. The girl beside the cradle rushed to her and exclaimed: "Oh, in the chamber there is a princess who weeps bitterly and calls for a count named Bernhard Bertelsköld."

At these words the color left the young woman's cheeks so quickly that the girl asked anxiously: "Are you not well, ma'am?"

Greta—let us call her so, for it was indeed the young wife of the curate, our former friend from Majniemi—Greta sent away her curious children, and entered the chamber. What did she see there? A young and beautiful maiden, in a long tight-fitting robe of dark-green velvet, pale as marble, with closed eyes, stretched upon the bed. Greta knew her from the landing scene; she understood that she was the princess; she observed, what had been unnoticed by the count,

that her high-born guest was bleeding from a severe contusion over the left temple. She hastened to cool the lovely brown-haired head with wet bandages.

But the princess continued to utter violently, and in entire unconsciousness, broken sentences at whose meaning her young nurse shuddered.

"Take care, Bertelsköld! . . . . Do you realize count, that I am Queen of Sweden! . . . . Oh, how I hate you! You detested one . . . . you believe that I love you? Do you see the scaffold at Brunkeberg square—your scaffold—my scaffold—the scaffold of all Sweden? Oh . . . . you shall bleed . . . . you shall bleed . . . . And I shall bleed with you . . . . for you know that I love you . . . . Do not say that word, count, for then I will kill you. . . . . Hush! . . . . the queen comes . . . . Yes, your majesty . . . . you may command, I will obey."

The princess sighed deeply, her lips closed, and she seemed to slumber. At that moment, voices were heard in the main room; Greta hurried thither, and saw before her . . . the king and Reutercrantz.

Neither of them had met Bertelsköld; neither knew of the princess' presence. Greta quickly discovered this, and calmed herself.

"God's peace!" exclaimed the king, rather rudely, glancing toward the milk-shelf. "We are very hungry. Give us some bread and curds."

"If your majesty will be satisfied with our humble fare . . . . " answered Greta, coloring to the tips of her ears.

The king turned away in vexation. "It is unendurable to be recognized everywhere," said he in a low tone to Reutercrantz.

"My dear hostess," exclaimed the latter, gaily, "I see that you take this little fellow to be a king! Well, by my crown! I call that a knowledge of men. That would be fine indeed; such a king the Danes would put on a piece of buttered bread and swallow at a

mouthful. But since we are recognized, I will no longer conceal myself. My dear—I am the king! Now bring on the curds." And at these words, Reutercrantz assumed a majestic and commanding air.

Greta chose the most delicate curds, brought some loaves of splendid fresh bread made of new grain, and a cake of butter as yellow as the full moon on a clear sky. The frugal parsonage possessed but a single silver spoon; this Reutercrantz took without ceremony, to prove his royal dignity; and the king quickly seized the wooden spoon. And then both of them attacked the dishes with an appetite so rustic that the oldest boy pulled his mother's dress and said: "If that is a king, then I am a king too."

Reutercrantz, who heard this, turned around, wiped his mouth, and said: "Do you see, my friend?—a king must also be a bit of a philosopher—and philosophy is an honorable thing," added he, making another bold attack upon the curds.

At this moment the voice of the princess was plainly heard from the chamber.

"Save me, count! . . . . the king is coming!"

The king and Reutercrantz exchanged glances. The silver spoon stopped motionless on its way toward the curds; the wooden spoon stopped equally motionless, on its way to the king's lips. Greta hastened, pale with dismay, into the chamber.

The voice within continued: "And you still believe, count, that I am to be his! . . . . Oh, that intolerable boy, with his dogs and horses and soldiers! . . . . have I not said that I detest him?"

"Your majesty!" said Reutercrantz, hastily rising.

The king colored slightly, but remained sitting, and answered, with apparent indifference, as he resumed the use of the wooden spoon: "My mother has always been afraid of Finland; she believes it is haunted."

"Yes, indeed!" replied the other, resuming his seat.

Now a gentle voice was heard from within the chamber, speaking soothing words; but the princess grew still more violent.

"Away!" cried she. "Kill me! disgrace me! I will not become a queen—a puppet in the hands of a puppet! Away, your majesty! away! away! away! Have I not told you that I love . . . . no, I have not told you. You may kill me, sire; but I have said nothing."

The king arose. He was indeed as yet nothing but a boy. He wished to appear very calm, very cold; he crossed the hall with steady steps; but he did not notice that he pushed the cradle against the wall, upset a bench, and trampled to pieces one of the children's wooden horses just as he was stepping into the chamber. Greta met him at the door.

"Your majesty," said she, trembling, but resolute, "I ask of you the kindness not to disturb my insane sister."

"Your sister?"

"Yes, my poor unfortunate sister, who was once a chambermaiden of her majesty the queen, your mother. My sister suffered from an unhappy love, and her reason has been gone since then. She believes that she is still at the court . . . "

"Strange!" said the king, almost inaudibly. "The voice resembled . . . . but that is absurd . . . . . "

"Yes, is it not?" interrupted Reutercrantz, laughing, and exchanging a quick glance with Greta, still in the door. "If I had not an hour ago seen the princess riding in an entirely different direction, then I would have given myself into the power of Belzebub if . . . . Yes, her majesty is right; there are indeed ghosts about here, even in broad daylight. Come, if your majesty pleases, we will hunt up our runaways. It seems to me I hear dogs barking over there in the thicket . . . . ".

The king did not answer, but as he left the house

he slipped a ducat into the hand of the oldest boy. The lad held the yellow coin up to the light, showing it to the smaller boys. One of these took courage at the sight, ran after the king, and cried out loudly: "Wait! give me a penny too! you have broken my horse."

The king turned around laughing. "Well," said he, "if I have broken your horse, you shall have another." And he hurried away with Reutercrantz.

And, to complete the incident, we must add that the next morning there stood under the window of the parsonage one of the prettiest of little Öland ponies, fully equipped, with saddle, stirrups, and bridle, and the groom who brought it, brought also the message that his majesty had sent a horse to replace the one he had trampled on.

CHAPTER III

TWO OLD-TIME FRIENDS.

WE return for a moment to the princess. Scarcely had the king left the house, when the young wife, with a steady and skilful hand, opened one of the delicate blue veins beneath the white skin of the princess' arm. In those times, most ministers and their wives were more or less familiar with domestic remedies and some practical surgery; for there were then no learned doctors, and surgeons were not always at one's elbow. The bleeding resulted in checking the delirium; the fever moderated, and the princess soon fell into a peaceful slumber.

Just then Bertelsköld returned with the king's physician and two of the court ladies, accompanied by their maids, whom he had brought to care for the

wounded princess. The count entered the room hastily, and was about to go into the chamber with his attendants, when he was stopped by a slightly trembling hand which touched his arm.

"Whither, Count Bertelsköld?" said a voice, which made a strange impression upon the count, without his scarcely knowing why.

"Is her highness very ill?" inquired the count, again trying to hasten past the speaker.

"Her highness the princess is no longer here," replied the voice, and the minister's young wife again stood in his way.

"What? I left her here scarcely two hours ago," exclaimed the count, in surprise and irritation.

"Her highness felt better immediately, and resumed the chase on horseback," answered the young woman, with downcast eyes, and continuing to guard the chamber door. Over these pure lips an untruth had never passed before, and she blushed in the presence of her children, who could not fail to notice the deception.

Bertelsköld observed this hesitation, without guessing its cause. Strange thoughts passed through his brain. Even he, although a native Finn, was not free from belief in the witchcraft of his countrymen. The young woman's persistence, her almost transparent falsehood, must have some hidden motive. Still more excitedly, the count seized her by the arm and pushed her aside.

"You lie!" he exclaimed. "The princess must be here."

But Greta did not yield. For the third time she placed herself resolutely in front of the chamber door, and said in a low voice:

"No, count, you cannot enter. You would kill my insane sister; and I will not permit it."

Bertelsköld turned to the grooms who had followed him into the room, and said angrily:

"Remove that senseless woman from the door! The princess is in there, dead or alive."

The grooms approached ; the children began crying. Only one of the boys—little Pehr, the same who ran after the king—threw himself in front of the first groom, clung to his legs, and tried to trip him. "If you hurt my mamma," cried he, "I will kill you with my wooden sword !"

The groom tried in vain to free himself, and raised his whip to rid his legs of their troublesome burden. This was more than the maternal eye could endure. A moment Greta struggled with herself ; then she stepped quickly to the count, rose on tiptoe, for he was very tall, and whispered in his ear these words :

"Bernhard, you, but no one else, may enter the chamber. I beg you to send these people away."

The effect of these words was wonderful. The count colored quickly, turned around, and looked at the young wife with amazed and curious glances. But it was only for an instant. He turned immediately to his attendants, and said in a voice whose emotion not all his self-control could hide :

"She is right. The princess has really gone away, and is probably already with her majesty the queen. Forgive me, ladies, that I have troubled you. I beg you to hasten on before me ; I will soon follow."

Whispering among themselves, the court ladies and their attendants withdrew, uncertain what to think of the sudden change in the count's mood.

The two old-time friends remained alone, surrounded only by the children. Neither uttered a word. The power of memory over once fervent hearts—youth's gentlest spring-time—blissful dreams of innocence and love—oh, what sadly tender thoughts awake in viewing you in the far-off horizon of human vision—a horizon of stars and morning-red, of flowers and fragrance from a time long past ! Years melt away, life fights its fiercest battles ; the heart is covered with the scars of healed wounds, while some are bleeding still ; thoughts and minds are changed, the bright hues fade, the flow-

ers lose their perfume, and here and there a yellow and withered leaf falls from the tree of life ; but untouched by time, unfaded, holy, wondrous, the memories of first love remain carved in the depths of the soul: it is a dawn which can behold its night, but whose roseate tints still tinge the clouds when the whole earth is wrapt in shade.

Fifteen years had passed since Bernhard Bertelsköld and his heart's first love had bidden each other farewell in Majniemi park. What was he now, and what was she ? He was a man of the world, a courtier, who, in long journeys abroad, in battles and adventures, in the constant society of the highest circles, had gained a rich experience of life, both good and evil ; a man whose heart had since found room for twenty loves, and to whom the tender passion had become an old familiar tale. She, at the age of thirty-two, was still almost a child in innocence ; her life had flown as quietly and tranquilly as a forest brook, with a little turbulence amongst the stones near its fount, with quickened speed as it descended the more rapid places in its channel, but otherwise the steady, quiet, innocent purling of a gently flowing stream, whose fresh coolness is a benediction to the enclosing shores. Now they stood once more at each other's side, the country woman and the man of the world, both silent at the contrast between what had been and what was.

Little Pehr was the first to break the silence. "Mamma," exclaimed he, with an unmistakable side-glance toward the count, "tell that bad man to go away !"

The child's puny anger moved the proud count almost to tears. He took the boy in his arms, kissed him, and said gently : "I will not harm your mother. Do you know, my boy, that your mamma and I once liked each other very much—in the old time," added he, in a low tone.

With this the ice was broken. But Greta feared

the dangerous topic. "Let us speak no more of that, count," said she.

"No," said Bertelsköld. "Let us rather speak of it. You do not know how the heart is refreshed by the memory of long-forgotten days of innocence. Do you recall old Jane's prophecy? I think she counted for me twenty loves," added he, lightly but sadly. "She was wrong, she counted too few. She might have said thirty. And yet, only one among them all is never to be forgotten."

"You owe me a wager, then, sir count," said Greta. "You promised me your father's copper ring in exchange for a bluebell."

"I cannot keep my promise if I would. The king's ring disappeared at a duel in Schleswig, where my father lost two fingers of his left hand. I have never recovered the ring, and I scarcely wish to; for although I myself have suffered by its loss, my dependants have gained. I have had misfortunes since then; I have more than once been sick, wounded, and nigh death; I have had many sorrows, but my subjects have regained their prosperity and happiness. My new steward writes to me that Majniemi is each year recovering from its impoverishment and that the wealth of my subjects is constantly increasing. I long to see my old home again. Tell me, Greta, is old Jane still living?"

"Oh, yes, sir count, but . . . . "

"But . . . . you say it sadly!"

"Yes, for . . . . I don't know as I ought to say it. She is accused of witchcraft, and the trial is about to begin. Oh, if you could go there!"

"Witchcraft?" repeated the count, hesitatingly. "That is a dangerous charge in these times. Throughout all Sweden stakes are burning, and the strangest things are told of the witches. You are right; I must immediately start for Majniemi. But . . . . " continued he, smilingly, "you no longer address me as of old."

"I, sir count?" said Greta, blushing.

"And yet you did, a little while ago."

"Because otherwise you would not have recognized me; and then . . . . your thirty-first love would have been lost," replied Greta, *naïvely*.

"My thirty-first? Ah, you remind me of the princess. She is still here?"

"Yes—asleep. She does not know that the king has just been here . . . . that he heard her, in her delirium, express her abhorrence for him and her love for another whose name she fortunately did not mention . . . . she does not know that I, with the greatest effort and by the aid of falsehood, prevented him from discovering her, and succeeded in diverting his suspicion. The king must not know that she was in the chamber during his visit here, for thus Sweden would lose a queen and you a . . . . " Greta could not utter the word.

"And this is why you . . . . ?"

"This is why I was forced to address you by the familiar name of former times. Otherwise you would have been the cause of a great calamity."

"Admirable woman! it was then to save what you call my love . . . . "

"No, sir count," answered Greta, in an almost reproachful tone, "it was to save a young girl's future and honor. It was to avert shame and discord from the family of the king. I have done what I ought; it remains for you to do what you ought."

"You are right, my friend," responded the count, thoughtfully. "A great and noble heart beats under your simple dress . . . . nobler than mine, more royal than that of high-born children. We must save the princess—but how?"

"Her highness needed only a bleeding and a refreshing slumber, to regain her health. I have provided one, nature the other. She will soon be able to leave the parsonage unobserved, and rejoin the royal

party. It must be your task to find a fit pretext for her absence."

"Greta, you are as wise as you are noble. How shall I thank you?"

"By no longer allowing the future Queen of Sweden to be . . . . the mistress of Count Bertelsköld."

"Angelic soul! how well you know how to touch the good chords in my breast! Oh, too often have frivolity and vanity gained the victory over my best purposes. It is because I had no good spirit whispering at my side: 'Be careful! under the roses crime and remorse are hidden!' Oh, that you would be my good angel, as you once were! What you was to me, no one else has been—no one in all my life!"

And the proud man of the world dropped a tear upon the hand that he lifted to his lips. But Greta gently withdrew her hand, with tear-filled eyes, and taking two of her boys upon her lap, said:

"You see, sir count, these are my good angels. Pray God that you may sometime understand true love; then your heart will no longer bleed in loneliness."

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF KING CHARLES'S HUNT.

THE chase was continued the following day, with splendid weather. Either the deer were growing tired, or the hunters had become more skilful; certain it is that the hunt was much more successful than it had been. The king killed one elk with his own hand, Reutercrantz killed another, Gustaf Gyllenstjerna a third, several of the courtiers one each. The young king was in fine spirits; he noted in his diary each shot,

both good and bad; he traversed the entire island of Åland, sometimes even crossing to another island where a fugitive elk had swam for refuge. He rode more recklessly than ever, changing horses four times a day. But the queen and the councillors were not in the best of humors. They began to long again for Stockholm, and viewed with disquietude the wild pranks of the king. There were whispers of high times over the goblets in the steward's house at Kastelholm, and that the majesty of the king was too often forgotten in the boisterousness of the boy.

One day there was a market-fair in Sund, and thousands of people streamed thither from the surrounding islets and from Åbo, many of them only to get a sight of the royal party. Rows of booths were erected near the church, and the royal family had ordered some tents to be pitched upon an elevation which afforded a view of the entire scene. The queen, with the court, promenaded amongst the gay groups of vendors, fishermen, sailors, and peasants. Bailiffs and overseers admonished the noisy crowd to be quiet; nor did the lower servants of the court neglect any opportunity of showing their importance by rebuking the offenders. But nevertheless, ceremonies and court customs were that day laid aside; court ladies were seen laughing and buying caps and ribbons of the vendors; the noble fops fastened to their velvet caps cock-feathers bought of peasant boys; the queen herself purchased with her own hand the fish which was to be served for dinner, and which, if we can trust tradition, consisted of flounders and gwiniad. But the king was nowhere to be seen. Where was that wild boy now romping? "Where?" exclaimed the keen and voluble Lady Stina Wrangel, who accidentally overheard one of these inquiries, in which the queen was forgotten and the mother appeared, "Where? Will your majesty permit me to speak freely?"

"Speak; you have a right to talk nonsense to-

day!" Stina Wrangel was a favorite with Queen Hedvig Eleonora.

"I will only say that noble deer must be caught by cunning. So long as your majesty goes out among the people in the splendor of your royal dignity, all will bow most humbly, but no one will betray where the king is. But if we—I mean your majesty and some of us girls as your guard—were to go out in the evening in disguise . . . . . "

The queen smiled. "You mean," she replied, "that I would then have the pleasure of being a cloak for your follies. . . . . But no matter; get us some peasant costumes, and let four men of the body-guard follow us at a distance, without exciting curiosity. No one but Juliana, you, Märtha Lejonhufvud, and Ebba Wachtmeister, must be in the secret. Now march!"

So said, so done; the daring little court lady flew off like an arrow, and an hour later the queen appeared transformed into a respectable old Åland woman in Sunday clothes, while her four maidens, decked out in the gay ribbons they had just bought, appeared, dancing with merriment like veritable peasant girls. Princess Juliana was still pale and suffering from the fall from her horse. All five were quite ready, when the queen began to fear that the costumes were not sufficient—that the incognito might be discovered, and the adventure possibly compromise her dignity. After some reflection, she called her favorite, Count Bertelsköld, let him into the secret, and directed him to accompany them as protector. The count was not a little surprised; it was not easy for him to find a peasant dress to fit his tall stature; but fortunately several were on hand to serve in possible masquerades, —and so at last all were ready. It was seven o'clock in the evening, and darkness had already set in. All stole silently out of the parsonage and started for the village.

At that time whiskey was well known; but it had not yet changed the markets into scenes of quarrelling and fighting; yet there were ale-shops where disorder reigned. With secret misgivings, the queen sent Bertelsköld to ascertain if the king was at any of these places. The count went; he had to crowd his way through here and there, and bear rude jostlings and insulting words; but he returned with the reassuring intelligence that the king was not to be found at any of the ale-shops.

At the outskirts of the town was a large peasant house, around which many people had gathered. From within was heard the sound of a bagpipe, accompanied sometimes by singing voices, sometimes by a large kettle-drum of calf-skin. It was plain that inside were people playing and dancing. In obedience to a nod from the queen, Bertelsköld forced an entrance into the crowd, and the party pushed cautiously after him. If the accounts are to be believed, the expedition did not prove entirely a success. Some merry fellows met the new-comers at the entrance; one took the queen around the waist and gave the old lady a few lively turns about the room; another threw his arms around Stina Wrangel's neck, and pressed a resounding kiss upon her lips; a third took Ebba Wachtmeister on his arm, and started, *sans façon*, to carry her away. All the ladies were half-dead with fright, and already repented a thousand times their rashness; but Bertelsköld's coolness saved everything. He cried out, rather loudly, and with accents as Ålandish as possible: "Come, boys! over there the king has started the spigots of the ale-kegs, and everyone can drink as much as he likes." This worked immediately. The greater part of the crowd rushed to the point indicated, and the ladies were freed from their troublesome admirers, who speedily forsook them for the pleasures of Bacchus.

"Let us go, count," said the corpulent queen, who,

still panting for breath after the fatiguing swing-dance, had already had quite enough of the adventure.

"Yes, let us go," whispered the most timid of the girls. But the one who did not allow herself to be frightened was Stina Wrangel.

"Wait; let me look about a little before we go," said she, in a low voice, and without waiting for an answer, she quickly passed into the further room. The others, with or without their will, were compelled to wait in the entry, concealing themselves in a dark corner.

There was a wedding in the large room, which was filled with people, leaving only a space in the centre for dancing and sports. The piper blew as long and loudly as his lungs would let him; when he became tired, the peasant girls took up the tune with their voices, and now and then the drum intoned at proper intervals. Burning rush-lights and tallow-candles, set in scooped-out turnips, lighted the room and flickered in the breeze which came in through the open windows and kept the air pleasantly cool. The young people seemed to be greatly enjoying themselves; now and then an old fisherman or an aged matron would be drawn into their circle and treated to a lively shaking up. The manners, it is true, were not particularly refined; these hands, accustomed to the net and the axe, wore the gloves of nature, and took rather a vigorous grasp when once they got hold; nor were the steps learned in the dancing-school of Alina Frasa. Yet all went on honestly and honorably; this rudeness had an innocence which outweighed the refined frivolity of the court, and the little court lady at the door found a sincere pleasure in viewing this, to her, unusual scene.

Suddenly she glided out into the corridor, pulled the queen by the skirt, and said: "Your majesty, the king is here."

The king was indeed there, with two or three of his companions. All were dressed in simple hunting-

dresses, in the fashion of the court huntsmen; Reutercrantz had taken care to keep the grooms busy elsewhere, so that there was no reason to fear their meddling with the king's adventures. It is not impossible that some of the peasants suspected who the strange guests were; indeed, some surprise was naturally aroused, when three ducats were found among the silver and copper coins of the large wedding-plate, but those who had any suspicion were too sensible to betray it, and so the dance went on unhindered by the presence of the strange hunters. It was easily to be seen that the king felt well — indeed, Charles XI always felt more at ease in uneducated circles than in higher and more cultivated ones, where he was embarrassed by his shyness and lack of social tact. He danced with the girls and the old women, to the great delight of all; and when the silver goblets of the house, filled to the brim with French wine, spiced with caraway and cardamom, circled among the more prominent guests, the king preferred to steal away to the immense ale-barrel which was placed upon a table near the fire-place for the large crowd of guests, and took a draught in true peasant style.

Yet, it was written in the stars that the incognito of the high guests should not be entirely preserved. Little Pehr, from the parsonage, had come with his mother to the market, and, as a member of the clergy, had been invited to the wedding. There he had crept into a corner near the ale-barrel. Scarcely had he caught sight of the young huntsman before he cried:

"Thank you for the horse!"

The king turned away. The mother tried to keep the little fellow quiet, and succeeded for a while; but it was not long before our good Pehr again caught sight of the huntsman, and cried, so loudly that all around heard him:

"There is the nice king who gave me a horse!"

The silent suspicions which had already been ex-

cited in the minds of several of the guests were unexpectedly confirmed by the child's words. They began exchanging significant glances with each other ; and the strange huntsmen soon noticed, to their great annoyance, that a vacant circle was forming around them, and that a number of persons stood staring at them from a respectful distance. The king immediately gave a signal to his friends, and approached the door to retire in silence. But the rumor of his presence had flown like lightning through the whole assembly, and even reached the spectators in the yard, who now, in their turn, rushed in to get a glance at the young lord and king of the country. The crowd in the door became so dense that no one could get out or in ; and the king was greatly embarrassed and puzzled to know how to escape the importunateness of the people.

Just at this moment, the queen, the princess, Bertelsköld, and the court ladies, had forced their way to the door to see the king, and were now caught and pressed between those who wished to go out and those who wished to enter. The young curate's wife from Saltvik had also desired to retire with her boy, not a little annoyed by the confusion which his active tongue had caused. The child was closely squeezed by the crowd, and began crying ; a sailor, near by, pitying the little fellow, lifted him upon his broad shoulders, to help him through.

Little Pehr now thought himself a great fellow, as from the shoulders of the sailor he had a full view of the entire hall, and was a head taller than any of the others. He looked around him like a king on his throne, and presently his little eyes rested upon some faces which he seemed to recognize.

"Take care, mamma!" he cried, "there is that bad count who wished to hurt you at our house." It happened just at that moment that the king stood close by; he had already recognized the little fellow, and re-

ceived a proof of the keen powers of observation which not infrequently is found in intelligent children.

"What do you say?" said the royal huntsman, seizing the boy's hand.

"Yes, yes," continued the little fellow, excited and happy in his high place of honor, "do you think I don't know you? You are the king, and there is the count, and there is the princess who was in the chamber when you were at our house. Oh, yes, I know you very well, although nobody ever knows me again."

The king's eye followed the pointing finger of the boy, and he thought he recognized the Princess Juliana in a peasant dress, although her face was half hidden by a white kerchief.

"Was she in the chamber, when I was at your house?" repeated he, with a slight tremor in his voice.

"What nonsense are you talking, Pehr?" the mother was heard to whisper close beside him. "Here is a wheat-cake for you;" and with this she tried to close his mouth.

But the boy continued talking, while he munched his cake:

"Oh, yes, she was in the chamber when you ate curds and trampled on my wooden pony; and then mamma scratched her in the arm and made it bleed; and then mamma told the count it was her sister. But mamma has no sister."

Meanwhile Bertelsköld had succeeded in forcing back the crowd in the corridor and gaining a retreat for the ladies. All the high-born guests at last reached the yard, and the queen, no longer able to control her anger, seized her royal son by the arm and whispered:

"Your majesty, is it thus a king of Sweden preserves his dignity in the eyes of the people?"

The king flushed deeply, and replied, also in a whisper: "Your majesty, Count Horn has always presented your high example for me to follow. And who

is that lady with the white kerchief, who also has honored this festival with her presence?"

"She is the future queen, who with good reason has felt uneasy over the boyish conduct of the future king."

"Then greet the future queen, and say that the future king—'the odious boy, with his horses and soldiers'—will not make her 'a puppet in the hands of a puppet.' No, your majesty; this future queen will never be a queen, at least in Sweden, unless she will wait for my successor."

And with these words the king hastened away, leaving the queen in anger and amazement at what was to her a complete enigma.

There was nothing now to be done but to reach the parsonage as secretly as possible. The narrative does not mention what further adventures were met with; but it is probable that the boldness of one man and the arts of five women were sufficient to enable them to reach their destination without hindrance. But the people at the festive house, slow to comprehend, like all our countrymen, had only after the departure of the royal party fully realized the honor which, without their knowledge, had been shown the festival; and their old love for the royal family broke out into a ringing cheer, which was heard through the silence of the night even to the parsonage.

But Greta, of Saltvik, with tearful eyes pressed the little Pehr to her heart and said:

"Unhappy child! you have destroyed a crown!"

Pehr was at first frightened, although he did not in the least understand. But he knew that he had done something wrong. He pondered the matter awhile; then he said:

"Don't be angry, mamma! The king trampled on my horse, and gave me another in its place. If I have broken his crown, I will make him another one. So don't be angry, mamma!"

Greta smiled: "What can a child not do?"

But one thing is sure: it was not the Princess Juliana who became the mother of Charles XII. Had it been she, who knows how it would have been now, here in the North? There came a day when she, the intended Queen of Sweden, thought herself happy at being able to cover her errors by accepting the hand of a shop-keeper—when she was forced to exchange the lustre of that crown which shone over her youth, for involuntary exile, a stained name, a life of repentance, and a grave of oblivion. Poor, beautiful princess!—who shall cast at you the first stone?

But we will return to throw a hasty farewell glance upon the close of the king's hunt.

The sixth of September, 1671, was fixed as the date of the royal family's departure. The queen and the councillors left the shores of Åland gladly; but the king and the younger members of the court bade regretful farewells to the free life of field and forest. It is said that a part of the younger nobility here favored a plan for declaring the king to be of age one year before the legal period, and for giving him absolute power. However, the plan came to naught; and it was better so; full power came early enough, in due course of time.

The visit of the royal family was distinguished by several deeds of grace. It is reported that churches and the poor received material aid; but no evidence of this is to be had from the church-journals, as they were afterwards destroyed during great periods of war. One of the best marksmen of Åland, who had killed an elk and thereby forfeited his life, was pardoned by the king. So far as the elks are concerned, their proud and high-borne antlers were seen forty years later amongst the foliage of Åland's forests. But the long period of war, which spread so great a desolation, destroyed them too. In the year 1710, when the island expected a visit from the enemy, a great massacre of

the elks was had, by order of the Swedish government; their flesh was cured, their skins were made into jackets for the horsemen of Charles XII. The balls of the enemy swept away the few survivors. After that time a solitary pair roamed here and there about their former pastures, until, in the year 1778, the last elk was shot on Flaka farm, in Lemland parish.

This was the first and only visit of Charles XI to Finnish soil. The royal frigate lay in readiness with an hundred pennants floating; the boats put out from land—the vast crowds which lined the shores sent up a thousand-voiced hurrah for the beloved king—the frigate's cannon answered with a thundering farewell. When the smoke of the last shot disappeared, the king was seen with uncovered head waving his last good-bye; and soon the proud frigate was cleaving a broad furrow in the waves, which glimmered like gold in the flush of sunset.

CHAPTER V.

THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

BEFORE proceeding further with our story, we must go back about four months. It was Rogation-week, in the year 1671. The ground had lately been free from snow; a warm and genial rain had been succeeded by equally genial sunshine; a light mist rose from the still yellow earth, where the first shoots commenced to appear; one almost seemed to hear the grass grow, and hour by hour to see the meadows greening and the trees a-budding.

And again we are in the neighborhood of Majniemi, a few miles from Åbo. Since we last visited this region, fifteen years ago, it has assumed a gladder and more

prepossessing aspect. It is true, there is still a good deal of poverty in the small huts surrounding the proud castle; but the misery, the despair, the hatred, which reigned there in the time of the late count, are now much softened. Count Bernhard Bertelsköld has a new steward on his estate; the old Master Adam, fearing the vengeance of his former subjects, has moved to Åbo city, and settled down there, to watch, like a dragon, over the riches he had wrung from the poor peasants. The new steward has had strict instructions from his master to deal mercifully with the peasants, to assist the most industrious with small loans and the poorest with remissions of the farm-rent. And so a part of the many deserted farms are again inhabited, the fields which had grown wild are again sown with all kinds of seed; better times might surely be expected, if the peasant on the estates of the nobility had any security for the future. But who could assure him that his present mild master might not some day be succeeded by a despot who would again treat his subjects like unreasoning brutes? Therefore the peasant worked only for the day, contented if he had peace and bread for the moment; but nobody thought of new tillings, or of the welfare of future generations,—for who would wish to see his labor sometime become the prey of a new Master Adam?

About a mile and a half from the castle was situated Arvio village—the same which had been almost entirely desolated by the results of the rebellion in the time of Master Adam. The principal part of the population was at work in the fields in the lovely afternoon.

A solitary old woman was wandering along the road leading through the village. She was dressed in black, coarse, but clean woollen stuff. Her bent figure gave evidence of advanced age, but her sharp and penetrating eyes revealed a clear and active mind, while her quick motions indicated physical strength which age had not yet been able seriously to impair.

Looking more closely at the old woman, we recognize without difficulty "Black Jane," whom the reader may remember from our former story. Persons unacquainted with her would easily have thought her to be about sixty years of age; others knew quite well that she must be at least seventy-five. She proceeded cautiously along the road, stopping here and there to study closely the houses of the village. As soon as it appeared to her that she had nothing to fear from one of these, she entered with her bundle, remained sometime within, came out with the bundle always larger than before, and continued her way to the next house. What was her errand at these places, and what did she bring away?

In order that no unjust suspicion may rest upon a person for whom we have a sort of old-time friendship, we will follow her on some of these visits. In the first house the mistress was at home, churning. Black Jane was received kindly, spent a few moments in the milk-room, and went away with many thanks and a pair of new stockings in her bundle. In the next house, a girl of eighteen or twenty years was at home, taking care of the small children. Here Jane was just as welcome; a fire was lighted, and in its ashes future events were read. The result must have particularly pleased the young girl, for at Jane's departure the contents of her bundle were increased by a large cheese. In the third house the husband was at home, sick. Jane was called, but came reluctantly; yet she was persuaded to work over the sick man, and was rewarded with a shining silver dollar, with the promise of another if the man proved able to go out on the morrow. In the fourth house she met a girl who took her into the barn and confided to her that her betrothed had forsaken her, and asked Jane to prepare for him a magic philter. What was the result, the story does not state; but Jane came away with a pair of new garters. At the fifth house, she was driven away with threats and hard

words; the housewife accused her of having stolen wool on Easter night, and bewitched the cows so that they gave no milk. In the sixth house, she was again well received; a horse had become sick and was almost dying; Jane gave the horse some whiskey, tied a bandage around its neck, and received in reward a measure of salt. In the seventh house, good-luck was needed for the brewing; Jane cleaned the brewing kettle with a decoction of mountain-ash, heather, and willows, which certainly ought to bring good-luck, and received for this friendly service some loaves of fresh bread and some rolls of butter.

Thus she went from house to house; and at last the old woman's burden, in her bundle and bag of salt, was so great that she felt unable to carry more at that time. And as evening was approaching, she thought best to turn homeward, paying no further attention to the signals which greeted her from nearly every house she passed. For such visits to the village were not made every day, and Jane was in great demand also in other places; therefore every one wished to improve the opportunity.

Meanwhile the men began to return from their work, and Jane did not think it advisable to meet them, with her bag and bundle. She knew that most of them feared her, but she knew also that many accused her of everything evil which happened in the town, and threatened to denounce her, which at that time was a very dangerous thing. She therefore chose a short cut across the meadows, and from there took the path leading through the forest to the beach.

She had still a mile and a half to go, and although she walked rapidly, the evening sun sank behind the tree-tops while Jane was still in the forest. The night came on; but it was not particularly dangerous in that country in the middle of May, when the veil of darkness floats lightly over the branches and tree-tops like a pleasant dream, while the throstle sings its sad but

beautiful song in the dark pine-forest. And there was another songster that made itself heard from the distance, by the sea, and at whose tones the throstle hushed its notes; it was the nightingale, which then, as sometimes still, was a dear southern guest on the lower coast of Finland.

But Jane hastened on, for she was not sure that some ill-disposed person might not have taken her boat at the shore, in which case she would be compelled to spend the night in the forest. As she walked on alone in the beautiful night, while strange thoughts of bygone times arose in her mind, she heard a peculiar sound in the forest. It was not the clucking of the black-cock, it was not the howling of the wolf, nor the harsh sound of the howlet in the unploughed border of the rye-field. It was the voice of a crying child.

Jane was fond of children, and went in the direction of the voice. After a long *détour*, she found three children, a boy and two girls, all about five or six years old, huddled together at the foot of a tree; two of them slept the sleep of innocence on the damp ground, but one of the girls was awake and crying from hunger and fright. Jane went to the children.

"Why are you here alone in the forest?" asked she.

"Ah," said the girl, "we drove the cows to pasture to-day for the first time; it rained at noon, and there was a lovely rainbow. Then Tommy said: 'Let us catch that rainbow, it is right by the edge of the forest.' But when we got there, the rainbow was still a little farther away, and so we went further and further into the woods, until we could not find our way home."

Jane smiled almost sadly. Perhaps she thought how these children had ran after the rainbow, as older people run after happiness. They say, like the children: "It is so very near—let us catch it!" And when they get there, it is again far away, and when

they reach the place where it seemed to be, it shines far off among the clouds, and so they follow the disappearing traces till at last they are lost in the deep forest.

"Follow me," said Jane; "to-night you can sleep in my cabin. To-morrow I will take you home."

The sleeping children were aroused with considerable effort, and the party continued their way to the beach. The children walked silent and dejected; they knew Black Jane, and had heard the rumors about her; very likely they would have preferred to stay in the woods; but they dared not show their fear. Only Tommy had courage to say, half crying:

"I don't want to go into the woods with the witch; I want to go home to mamma."

"We want to go home to mamma," sobbed both the girls.

"What now, you little fools!" muttered Jane. "Your mother is asleep, and it is three miles to the village. Come! do your best, and hurry on; you will get some bread and milk at my house."

Bread and milk! Who has not been a child, and been hungry, and heard these words, comprising for the moment all the happiness and luxury of earth? The tears ceased, and the children walked on with renewed strength; but one of the girls now and then broke off little branches and strewed them behind her on the path.

"Why do you do that?" whispered the other girl.

"Hush!" answered the little one. "Grandma has told me of a girl who was carried away by a witch into the forest, and she strewed little twigs behind her, and afterwards found her way home again by means of them."

If Jane had heard these words, she would have had reason to tremble. When an idea, a prejudice, or a fancy, has once seized upon a people, then its extent and weight are decidedly to be measured by the words

of little children. If they know nothing about it, be sure that the idea has not yet obtained a hold upon heart and life. But when it begins to play about the lips of children, then those who gain by it may rejoice, and those who are imperilled by it tremble; for then it is certain that this idea has got a hold upon all hearts, penetrated the family circle, permeated even the mother's milk, and cannot be eradicated in many generations.

At the time of which we speak, the old belief in witches and sorcery had once more blazed up into a terrifying flame. In the very century which gave birth to Newton, Leibnitz, and Voltaire, at the very moment when throughout the greater part of Europe the Reformation had heralded the dawning of a brighter time, there came this remarkable revisitation of the deepest darkness of heathenism and of mediæval times. The stakes of heretics had not yet ceased to burn in Catholic Europe, when the stakes of witches began to be lighted in the Protestant world. Belief in sorcery became an article of faith, accepted by the most enlightened people of the time. Days for general prayers were appointed, to avert "the rage of Satan"; royal proclamations warned the people, strengthened their faith, and inflamed their imagination; witchcraft-commissioners were appointed, consisting one-half of clergy and one-half of laity, which sentenced many hundreds to be burned at the stake "for the salvation of their souls" —of which we shall see more hereafter. In Sweden, this agitation began in Norrland during the times of Gustaf Adolf, and spread farther and farther, until it raged over the whole country, and most cruelly in Dalarna. Finland, the home of witchcraft from earliest times, was quickly and violently affected, the stake flaming brightly during almost the entire latter half of the seventeenth century; even in Sweden, it was only necessary to be a Finn, old and ugly, in order to be dragged before one of these terrible tribunals which

sentenced without mercy while they judged without reason. And the strange part which little children played in this frightful drama, will soon be seen.

But we must return to Jane and the children in the wood. It was now late at night; when they reached the shore, they got into the boat and rowed over to Jane's cabin, which the reader will remember from a former chapter. Here everything looked as it did fifteen years ago, with one exception: a strange ornament hung by a string suspended from the ceiling—a grinning skull. Its purpose was either to frighten superstitious people from visiting her cabin (for Jane allowed no visitors), or to gratify the peculiar love of the horrible which is often a product of solitude. When Jane lighted the dry chips on her fire-place, the empty sockets of the dead man stared at the newcomers from mid-air.

The children shrieked from fear.

"Hold your tongues!" said Jane, angrily. "As he is, all of us shall be; for man is only a worm of the earth. Come, come, dears, take seats here at the table and eat; then you can sleep in my bed."

And with these words, she took from her bundle the fresh loaves and the golden butter, and from the shelf her only dish of curds, and heartily invited the children to satisfy their hunger. And in order to please their eyes, she even took down from the shelf three shining brass plates, as bright as gold, and three spoons of the same metal, a relic of former times. But the children crept into a corner, and dared not move for fear. At last they were persuaded, half violently, to come to the table.

Hunger struggled with the terror of the poor little ones. At length hunger was almost victorious, when a trivial accident again spoiled all their appetite. One of those harmless beetles which the children call "blue-worms" and at spring-time often hide in the cracks of the walls, had got into the curds and began to walk

upon the surface, as a man walks across the ice. Scarcely did the children catch a sight of it before they threw away their spoons and bread, and again shrunk trembling into the corner.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Jane, angrily. The children did not answer. She repeated the question, and stepped nearer. Then all three commenced crying loudly, and the elder of the girls exclaimed: "We will not eat witch-food; witch-food turns into worms."

Jane tried vainly to calm the little ones, when at that moment the door was thrown open, and two persons, of a strange appearance, entered. One was almost entirely black—from very natural causes, for he was a charcoal-burner of the vicinity. The other was an old woman, fantastically dressed in a red skirt and jacket, with all sorts of embroidered symbols, and around her neck she wore a string of those shells that the peasants call snake-heads, and with which they still ornament their bridles. At this new and terrifying sight, the children crept under the bed, and remained there quite still, scarcely daring to breathe, and without being noticed by the new-comers.

Jane threw an angry glance at the visitors, and asked roughly: "Well, what's the matter now? Haven't I told you that I cannot help you?"

The man began, almost humbly: "Don't be angry, Jane, because we come at this time. It is now midnight, and Vapuri says that no one but you can help us. Four nights have I seen the dragon-fire burning in the forest; I have thrown steel at it, I have kept silent as a wall, but still the kettle has not appeared above the ground. Vapuri says that the devil is riding astride of it, and cannot be removed unless you conjure him seven times with dragon's-blood, bones of suicides, and the little-fingers of murdered children. Therefore . . . ."

"Yes, therefore you must help him," interrupted the old woman, earnestly. "Don't try to deceive us—

everybody knows that no one can do it as well as you, for you are an old acquaintance and a good friend of the devil. Lord Jesus! there he is now . . . . " shrieked she, as she noticed the skull hanging from the ceiling.

"Will you hold your tongue!" exclaimed Jane, angrily. "Are you not ashamed to speak such words here in my room?"

The strange woman mistook her meaning, and answered, somewhat puzzled: "Yes, Jane, it is stupid of me to take the Lord's name here in your house, for it destroys all your power. But I will mend my fault." And the half-crazed and sorcery-infected woman took two straws, laid them on the floor in the form of a cross, and trampled and spit upon them. "Now," added she, triumphantly, "now no more harm will come from my taking the Lord's name."

Poor woman! she knew not what she did. The dark demon of superstition had seized her; the spirit of unbelief had arisen from its unsubstantial emptiness and grown up into a terrible reality, into a sin blaspheming the holiest things.

Jane also was under the dominion of superstition; but she was not swallowed by it. Vapuri's blasphemy stirred her very soul. She sprang up and cried, with threatening gestures: "Go from my threshold, ye blasphemers! go, ye lost ones. Go! go! go!"

It would not have been prudent to defy Jane at that moment. She rose to her full height; her gray hairs fluttered, her bony hands were lifted threateningly. The coal-burner and his companion hastened out of doors; but Vapuri muttered maliciously: "She wants to keep her art to herself; but she shall be paid for this."

Jane went out to gather herbs, for that night it was full-moon. When she returned, she bethought her of the children, half-dead from fright. Their hiding-place under the bed was vacant. Jane searched everywhere for them, but in vain. They had disappeared, and left no trace behind.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ORDEAL BY WATER.

EARLY one fine morning at the beginning of June, in the year 1671, a large crowd was astir in the streets of Åbo and along the river banks. It was evident that some peculiar and unusual occurrence was looked for, although it was uncertain where or when it would take place. Now a noise was heard from the shore, and immediately several hundred people hurried there to see what was going on; then some people crowded together on the square in front of the cathedral, and instantly the number of curious ones increased, streaming from all directions; or again, the muskets of a detachment of soldiers shone in the newly-made Castle Street, and immediately the crowd hurried there. Aura river was covered with boats, which spread their white sails pleasantly to dry in the calm sunny morning air; and from the country came rows of wagons whose owners brought their products to market, and stopped in surprise at the throng of idle spectators.

Amongst the vessels lately arrived was a whole-decked craft which appeared larger and more conspicuous than the others, and loaded with the best Wasa rye, had forced its way to the vicinity of the only bridge which at that time afforded communication between the two shores. From the low cabin of the vessel came a short and thick-set old man, whose white hair, mustaches, and goatee contrasted strangely with his jovial and still ruddy face. Close behind him there crept from the same hiding-place a woman, also small and round, about ten years younger than the man, but equally cheerful and good-humored in appearance.

Both exchanged a few words with a couple of young men who formed the sole crew, and then started to go ashore—no easy undertaking, as no boat could move between the closely packed vessels, and the old people were obliged, in order to reach the shore, to climb over other boats which lay between their craft and the land.

The pair appeared to be heartily contented with each other. The man offered the woman his hand at all the difficult places; when they reached the shore, he took her around the waist and lifted her with the agility of a youth upon the dry ground. She thanked him with a good-humored nod, and they both started for the market-place to find the merchant to whom they intended to sell their rye. On their way, however, they happened to get among the crowd, and the old woman received a few accidental pushes from broad-shouldered sailors or impudent street-boys. The old man's white eye-brows were contracted threateningly at this, and with a "*Blitzdonnerkreutz-pappenheim!*" he thrust aside the offenders with the strong arm of a youth.

"Look here, my good friend," said he to a brawny old man who had just come from the country with a cartload of roots, "are people here in Åbo crazy? What are they running after so early in the morning—*mane manium et sero venientibus ossa*, as we used to say in old times when I attended the cathedral school?"

The man thus addressed turned phlegmatically around, rolled a large piece of plug-tobacco between his teeth, and answered, after a slight deliberation: "It is Black Jane, who is to suffer the water-ordeal."

"Ah—so!" answered the old man, unbuttoning his short sheepskin coat, which had become a little warm in the summer air. "Black Jane is a witch, then; *mala sibylla*, as near as I can understand."

"Yes," answered the man with the cart, shortly.

"Then she is certainly from East Bothnia?" asked the old woman, with a slight foreign accent.

"No," answered the laconic man. Then he added, with a mixture of pride and hesitation, as though he would claim a share in Jane's fame, yet feared the consequences: "Jane is from my home—Majniemi."

"My friend," continued the little old man, with comical gravity, "I will wager my vessel, with all its rye and rats, against an old scoop, that you would be a better comrade in a night attack than speaker at a birthday festival. Majniemi! May I be changed into a Croat if I know that parish. *Ubi nunc ecclesia* . . . . how strange! as soon as I see again that venerable cathedral where in old times I shot so many jackdaws with my crossbow, the Latin springs up again like rye in the stubble of an old clearing."

"It seems to me that Count Bertelsköld has a large estate with that name," interrupted the little round woman, making a vain attempt to continue the walk and take the old man along with her.

"Bertelsköld?" muttered he. "Yes! such is the harvest from his fields. He sowed sorcery, and he reaps witches; that is right—*hoc est in suum ordinem*, as the ancients so truly expressed themselves. Come, little mother, we will let them souse the witch; be sure that she will float, if she is of the true kind."

The old couple were about to move on; but the man with the load seized the old man by the coat with one hand, while, with a perplexed expression, he fumbled with the other hand under the dogskin cap which covered his gray hair.

"Can it . . . . can it be the captain?" stammered he, looking at the old man and his coat with earnest though stupid glances.

"What now! . . . . I believe I have seen you before," said the old man, looking sharply at the once muscular figure, now bent beneath the weight of years. "*Blitzdonnerkreutz!* Are you not Pekka, number thirty in Larsson's squadron of the late king's Finnish dragoons?"

"Certainly I am, and you are my captain," answered the man with the load, while a solitary but genuine tear found its way over the sunburnt and furrowed cheek, and fell upon the sheepskin coat, whose hem the man pressed to his bearded lips.

The little old man—in whom the reader has perhaps already recognized our good old friend Larsson, from the times of Gustaf Adolf—quickly forgot his Latin and the memory of the jackdaws at the cathedral, to shake the hand of his old comrade heartily.

"*Blitzpappenheim!* Is it you, Pekka!" he exclaimed. "Then there is still left one brave boy from the days of the great king; yes, yes, there are not many of us left on earth who are able to say that we have seen the white of the eye of the old corporal at Breitenfeld, and shed a drop of honest blood with our great king on the battlefield of Lützen. And you, Pekka, you are a farmer now, I see, and drive your own load; and I am a farmer too, my old friend, and command my own vessel, with my own boys, and my own rye. Here you see my wife, a little fuller in the waist and grayer on the head since we first kissed each other in Würzburg turrets, and cheated those vile Jesuits so handsomely. But I must also tell you that the old woman since then has given me eight boys and six girls—fourteen in all, my honest friend, of whom twelve are still alive, half of each kind. Well, well, Kätchen, it isn't worth while for you to look so proud over it. But tell me what devil got hold of our Bertel in his later years, that he became so little like himself? Yet," added he, "here I stand talking away the time when I ought to meet the merchant; I have still a mouth left, thank God, and it can still take beer as in the old days. In a little while I will be back again, and then you shall come on board my craft and share an honest jug of ale with your old captain."

The aged couple now continued their walk. Meanwhile the crowd had decreased, a part having gone to

the church, a part to Castle Street. The cause was soon evident. From the castle came a prisoner's cart, followed by a detachment of soldiers with a corporal at the head. In the cart was seen a pale, emaciated, languishing figure, in whom it was difficult to recognize Black Jane, who only a month before was so active in spite of her years. Bowed, chained hand and foot, she seemed insensible to both her shame and her misfortune. In the minds of the spectators, fear and detestation at the sight varied with the joy of at last seeing her, the long famous witch, in her degradation and punishment. No compassionate glance, no tear of sympathy, was seen in all the hundreds of eyes that surrounded her. It did not enter into the thoughts of a single person that this old woman was one of the many unfortunate victims of the blindest superstition ; no one imagined that a human heart was beating and suffering within her breast ; no one doubted that the sorceress, who had given her soul to the prince of darkness, had at the same time abjured all human feelings and forfeited the right to be treated and pitied like a human being.

Slowly passed the pitiful procession, exposed to the scorn of the spectators.

"Why have they not given the witch a broomstick to ride on?"

"Jane, Jane, where is the devil now, that he does not come to help you?"

"Blow the chains off your hands! Put raven's wings upon your shoulders, or fly in owl's feathers to Brocken ; it would be a fine sight!"

But many silently made the sign of the cross, a surviving custom of Catholic times, which still lingered, in spite of the zeal of the reformers, and was used secretly by the older people.

"But what has the witch done?" asked Larsson, returning from the house of the merchant, with his wife upon his arm.

"What has she done?" repeated a bystander, a blowzy burgher. "It is not so easy to tell it all. Write her sins upon parchment, and the list will reach from Åbo to Wiborg. What has she done, you ask! I can at least tell you this—that she has bewitched men and women and beasts; that she has changed honest Christians into wolves, and led many innocent children into the company of the dark spirits at Brocken."

"Well, then burn the wretch," muttered the honest captain, angrily, "but don't go on reviling a prisoner who cannot move hand or foot. *Donnerblitz!* it stirs me to the depths of my soul, to see a hundred men barking at one old granny who cannot defend herself."

The procession had now reached the cathedral, where the people were assembled for morning prayer. It was six o'clock. At that time people rose earlier in the morning than now; in all classes of society the work of the day was begun at five o'clock in the morning and ended at eight in the evening. It was now rumored that the austere Bishop Gezelius himself would conduct the cathedral service. But the witch whose impure presence might infect the house of God, was not permitted to enter the temple. She was forced to stay with her guard in the narrow entrance leading into the south wing, and there to hear the prayer through the open doors.

And the rumor was true. After the hymn and the usual prayer, the bishop himself appeared in the great corridor in front of the south wing of the church, where he first offered a powerful prayer for protection against witchcraft and the wiles of Satan, who in these evil and godless times had brought so many souls to eternal destruction, and then directly addressed the prisoner in an equally powerful exhortation to repentance in the sight of God's congregation, and, for her own salvation and as a warning and caution to others, openly to confess

the crafty devices of the devil and the sinful company she had kept with the evil tempter.

At these words, Bishop Gezelius stepped close to the door where Jane was standing, and fixed upon her his penetrating glance. The whole bearing of the prelate, then fifty-six years of age, was manly, stern, and commanding; the fresh color of his cheeks, the sharply-curved nose, the long curly and already whitening hair, the gray beard floating upon his breast in full waves, everything was impressive in the appearance of the strongest man who had occupied the bishop's-chair of Åbo since the time of the hierarch Magnus I. It was the witch of Endor who had conjured the ghost of Samuel from the grave.

This glance, before which clergymen and laymen trembled from Åbo to Torneå, caused also Jane to tremble. But by and by she seemed to pluck up courage; a vivid flush colored her faded cheeks; she ventured from time to time to raise her eyes; at last she dared do what a bad conscience never dares: she looked straight into the face of the bishop, glance for glance. The head of the church paused, expecting a confession from the sinner's lips.

But the bent figure of the aged woman rose entirely straight, as she uttered a single word which struck all present with terror.

"Heretic!" she exclaimed.

The bishop recoiled. He now recollected that among the most serious and probable accusations against Jane was the one that she never, within man's memory, had participated in the Lord's supper. He began to guess at another explanation of this than merely an ungodly contempt for the sacrament. And the temper of the bishop was as violent as his mind was powerful.

"What do you dare to say?" exclaimed he, his cheeks also assuming a deeper red.

"I say that you, who call yourself the shepherd of

the church, and who stand here to accept the confession of my sins, are nothing but a heretic in the house of God. You and your chapter and your priests and all your people are nothing but lost apostates of the true faith. You sit in judgment over a faithful Catholic; but I say to you that it were better for you to dress in sackcloth and ashes and go to Rome to implore pardon of the holy father for your own heavy sins. I say to you that I am a Catholic, and faithful Bavaria is my fatherland. For over thirty years I have been obliged to witness your heretic belief; I have been obliged to deny my creed, and conceal my rosary as the thief conceals a stolen chalice; and I have spoken no word about it. You have imprisoned me, though innocent, for trivial things, and thrown me eighteen feet below the earth's surface in the terrible tower dungeon of your castle here in Åbo, where I have frozen and hungered and suffered all the horrors of darkness and solitude; and I have borne it without complaint. Now you drag me before your tribunals, and doom me, an old, poor, and defenseless woman, to death at the stake; and I bear this also, as the holy martyrs have borne in former times. But when you drag me into your church and demand that I, a true believer, shall confess unto you, a heretic, then my heart rises within me, and I open my lips for the first time in more than thirty years, and say to you: truly I am a great sinner, but you are still greater, for all of you are heretics and apostates, and as the earthly fire shall consume my body, so shall the eternal fire consume your souls, you children lost from the mother's lap of the great universal Catholic church!"

What did Bishop Gezelius, the stern and powerful Protestant, answer to this last enkindling flame from the glowing volcano of the Thirty Years' War? He controlled his voice, trembling with anger, lifted his hands, and said:

"I thank thee, God, that these blasphemous words

are not uttered in thy temple, but only in the entrance to thy temple. Verily thou permittest the power of the devil to be very great, since he can clothe himself even in the mantle of religion, and in this cloak defy the most holy. Yet we are assured that thou hast given him bounds, and that he shall not escape them, however craftily he may plead poverty, or innocence, or any manner of excuse. Lead this obdurate woman to the ordeal which the laws prescribe, and when the law has judged her, it will be time for the church once more, and finally, to proffer grace for her soul."

And Bishop Gezelius retired with lifted head. But the wasted form of Jane had again sank down after the violent outbreak which took all her strength, and allowed herself to be borne unresistingly away to the cruel buffoonery which awaited her in the name of the law.

Curious, merciless and pitiless, like the old Romans at the combats of the wild beasts in the arena, thousands of spectators waited outside the church for the water-ordeal of the witch. Scarcely had Jane appeared, and scarcely had the rumor spread amongst the crowd that she had not confessed, before a loud cry of joy arose and greeted the prisoner. Almost in triumph, she was accompanied to the bank of the river—but it was a cruel triumph; it was the cat's caresses of the mouse; it was the delight of the juggler that the victim of his mockery could no longer escape. So debased had the public mind become through these strange trials for witchcraft, which followed close upon each other, so confused were the ideas of humanity and pity, that people believed themselves to be doing God service by mocking the unfortunate woman in her shame and humiliation. And when it now became known also that Jane, in the very vestibule of the church, had scoffed the bishop and openly avowed her adherence to the hated papistical faith, there were no limits to the exultation and fury of the crowd; if they had

not expected such great pleasure in the water-ordeal, there would have been danger of their tearing the poor prisoner to pieces.

As soon as Jane, with her guard, had reached the appointed place at the river, the soldiers formed a half-circle around her, to keep back the ever-increasing crowd. Then a civil officer read *ex officio* the verdict of the appointed witchcraft commissioners, according to which the before-mentioned widow, called Black Jane, as she had practiced sorcery and kept company with the devil, but nevertheless could not be persuaded by gentle means to confess so great a sin, should now, for the glory of God and the discovery of the truth, be tried by the infallible water-ordeal, by which it would be clearly seen that she, through magic, would have power to pervert the order of nature, which decrees that a human being, tied and thrown into the water, must be swallowed up, without the assistance of the devil.

These water-ordeals—like the corresponding fire-ordeals, in which the accused had to hold red-hot iron—had already been long in vogue, and are frequently mentioned in the chronicles of mediæval times. They assume, strangely enough, that only the devil could save the guilty; while in the so-called "God's sentences" (the fire-ordeal) it was supposed that God would save the innocent through a miracle.

Jane was lifted down from the cart. Her hands and feet were bound firmly, even cruelly, with strong ropes, and in this wretched condition she was taken out upon a long pier which extended almost to the deepest part of the river. Not a word or complaint escaped her lips. But the curiosity of the spectators rose to its utmost height. As far as the eye could reach, every fence, every roof, and especially the bridge, was overcrowded with gaping mouths and outstretched necks; the guard of soldiers was even forced to keep back the intruders with pikes and halberds.

"A hundred dollars to fifty, that she will float!" exclaimed the same blowzy burgher who a short time before had irritated Larsson.

"Taken!" replied the latter, with an angry and defiant look toward his adversary.

Even at the last moment, at the end of the pier, the officers of the law in a loud voice inquired of the accused woman if she would voluntarily confess her guilt. The crowd trembled with fear lest she should do so. But from Jane's lips was only heard a low but distinct "No."

This was decisive. Two strong men seized the unhappy woman, one by the feet, the other under the arms, swung her a couple of times to give her a proper impetus, and flung her far out into the river, swollen by the spring floods. The splash of the old woman's body, as it fell into the water, was followed by an irrepressible cheer from the degraded people.

"She sinks! I have lost!" exclaimed the burgher, indignantly.

At the moment Jane fell into the water, she disappeared beneath the surface, leaving only a few ripples to mark the spot. The ringing cries of joy died away; every one felt that this joke was too outrageous, and scarcely better than a murder.

Boats were immediately sent out to find and save the drowning woman. Strange freaks of reason! Sinking was to have been the proof of her innocence; but this proof might cost her her life. To tell the truth, they were not prepared for this result; the officers of justice had taken it for granted that the witch would float.

Jane had been thrown into the river above the bridge. Suddenly a commotion arose on the bridge, which soon changed into the wildest delight.

"She floats! she floats!" cried the crowd; and some hastened to add, mockingly: "Head up-stream, old granny! Head up-stream!"

In truth, Jane's head appeared for a moment above the surface of the water, near the bridge. The next moment it sank again ; but the boats were close by, and succeeded in drawing the unfortunate woman up, before the stream had buried her forever in its depths. Unconscious, she was taken back to the castle.

Among the crowd now arose noise, cries, and disputes. Had the witch floated ? Had she sunk ? Both questions could be answered with yes, both with no. Neither Larsson nor the burgher would admit that he had lost the wager. But most of the people settled down to that which best suited their superstition—namely, that the witch had floated ; and all were agreed that no further proof of her guilt was necessary. With much noise and disorder, the crowds separated in all directions ; and thus ended this shameful scene, so characteristic of the period.

Strange contrast ! The same river which now returned its prey and the prey of superstition—the same river which was thus a witness to one of the grossest barbarities which recent times record—was the famous Aura upon whose shores Finland's culture has so beautifully bloomed ; the same Aura which the poets have since sung so ardently; the same Aura whose name will forever be connected with all that Finland, during the first centuries after the foundation of the university, achieved in science, art, and literature.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRIAL.

THE great fire which, on the twenty-ninth of May, 1681, destroyed the principal part of Åbo, then scarcely yet recovered from the conflagration of 1656, destroyed also the court-house and most of its invaluable records. But for this accident, we might perhaps have gained some documentary information regarding the memorable trial of the witch from Majniemi in 1671.

Black Jane had been imprisoned in Åbo castle during the entire summer after the cruel water-ordeal. Every means was used to get her to confess ; even the terrible dungeon in the main part of the castle, from which dark passages led both up and down, and where the accused person, stripped to the shirt, was left to languish in cold and darkness, eighteen feet below the surface of the ground—even that was tried in vain. Jane would not confess ; and although she was considered to be more than half convicted of her crime, yet the judges dared not sentence her to the stake, as the water-ordeal had resulted doubtfully, and could not be considered as fully convincing. Perhaps they still trembled, on this side of the sea, before the bold and fearless mind of old Brahe—who had already saved more than one of the victims of superstition from the ignorant prejudices of the judges.

Meanwhile the history of our trial relates that it was continued before the court of Åbo, in the middle of September, 1671 ; and as such trials afford curious glimpses of the customs and opinions of the time, it

may be worth our while to follow somewhat its progress.

In a small ante-chamber of the court-room stood the accused woman, surrounded by guards and witnesses, amongst the latter being several children. The market-place and the stairways were filled with curious people, who watched the progress of the trial with the greatest impatience.

At length a bailiff approached the ante-room, and called the accused woman. Jane followed him with tottering steps. Her strength was broken by the prison air and her protracted sufferings; her eyes shone with a strange light; she looked around with bewildered glances; her black dress, once so neat, had fallen into rags, and her white hair lay in matted locks around her faded and sallow face.

At the large table in the court-room only a few of the members of the court were sitting. The president, State-councillor Sparre, was absent on a journey to Stockholm. The secretary, Johan Gartzius, a man already gray-haired, kept the record; and the public prosecutor, Laurentius Wigelius, conducted the prosecution. Two of the witchcraft commissioners, an ecclesiastic and a layman, were also present.

The opening of the case, by Wigelius, tended to show how the horrible witchcraft—God preserve us!—had increased so rapidly in these evil times that no one could observe, without pity and terror, so many redeemed souls led to eternal destruction through the wiles of Satan. He considered the reality of the matter to be settled beyond all doubt, whatever objections the godless philosophers dared to bring against it; yet, for further proof, he would cite the evidence of the highly reverend Bishop Gezelius, who, in his *Encyclopædia synoptica*, had clearly and with great learning demonstrated that witches possessed the power, upon invocation of the devil, to damage harvests, ruin cattle,

make men lame, deaf, and blind, even to put horns upon human beings, devour peasants' carts and horses, and perform many other equally intolerable and outrageous acts of mischief. Also, the revered and learned Dominus Enevald, in a *dissertatio theologica*, has fully proven that at the market-place in Prague a sorcerer has been seen to swallow, for a small sum, a live pig. And furthermore, it was well known to all, not only that evil women, even in the most recent times, have used devilish tricks, like that of which the lawsuit between the highly reverend bishop and the widow of the late Dominus Alanus had furnished the clearest evidence, but also that many such women, both here and in Sweden, had been sentenced and burned for witchcraft, and yet it had not been possible to discover any marked diminution of the crime, which continued to flourish all the more obstinately in the parishes.

Now, continued the prosecutor, this woman, called Black Jane, was half convicted of keeping company with the devil, and of divers wicked acts, too numerous to be detailed. Yet as she, from pure perversity, continued to deny this, and as the prescribed ordeal by water had, through the intervention of the evil one, been subject to *dubia*, the prosecutor would, by virtue of his high authority, examine her still further on these points, and convict her by the testimony of witnesses, —all being done for the glory of God, the promotion of the truth, and the salvation of many poor souls from eternal destruction.

Having thus opened the case, the prosecutor began the examination of Jane, who at first answered almost defiantly. The following are some of the most important points in her testimony :

Question : Where were you born, and how did you come here ? *Answer:* In the village of Oppelsbach, near Augsburg, in Bavaria. I married, at twenty years of age, a Finnish soldier, and after many adventures and travels, followed him to this country, in 1640.

I became soon after a widow, and lived in my husband's cabin on Majniemi estate.

Q.: Why were you called Black Jane? and did not this name originate in your reputation for practicing the "black arts"? *A.:* I was called so because I always wore mourning. I mourn my husband, my faith, and my fatherland.

Q.: What is your faith? *A.:* The true-believing universal Roman church.

Q.: Have you not shown contempt toward the Lutheran faith and the sacraments? *A.:* Not until your bishop tried to compel me to make confession in his church. Then I called him a heretic; and he is one.

Witnesses were now called, who testified that Jane had been suspected of adherence to the papistical doctrines, as she never attended any church, and never gave any answer when questioned. Chaplain Stigzelius, a member of the witchcraft commission, testified that the accused, while in prison, had always refused to answer questions and to respond to exhortations to abjure the damnable papistical heresies. He was admonished to work still further for her conversion.

Q.: How have you earned your living during the thirty years since the death of your husband? *A.:* By spinning and by the benevolence of good people.

Q.: Is it true that a treasure is hidden in the ground near your cabin? *A.:* Those who believe so, or know it, may go and search.

The charcoal-burner, who was in Jane's house on the night already described, was called, and testified under oath that he had seen a dragon-fire burning on the shore of the islet. When asked if Jane had taught him some witchcraft to enable him to get hold of the treasure, he replied that in a moment of weakness he had solicited it of her, but she had driven him out of doors, with threatening words. He was admonished to seek a treasure in the words of God, and not in the arts of the devil.

Q.: As it is widely known that you tell fortunes from ashes, why deny it? *A.:* Silly people have teased me to do such things, and they have not seemed sinful. When wood is burned, all sorts of shapes can be seen in the live coals, but they are only the play of the flames. By such things, children are amused, while sensible people only laugh at them.

Not less than four peasant girls were called to testify that Jane had told their fortunes in the ashes, and promised to some a husband, and to some riches; and three of them testified tearfully that they still vainly awaited the fulfilment of the prophecy. But the fourth kept silent, only answering, when questioned, coloring deeply, that the very next week all had been fulfilled; and she had given Jane seven ells of linen. This was recorded.

Q.: Did you not bewitch Master Adam's servant, who had stolen a sack of flour from his master's mill? *A.:* I did not bewitch him; I only made him sick. Master Adam bade me do so, if I wished to keep my cottage.

Master Adam was called, and testified that he did not remember this.

Q.: How did you make the man sick? *A.:* I took an old penny, daubed it with pitch, threw it upon the ground, and said: "*Avaa korvas, herra Jumala, ja anna varkaan palkansa saada.*"* This I learned from Puujumala at Uleåborg.

Q.: Did you make the man well again, and how? *A.:* I read over him the gospel on Easter, and he recovered, having returned the stolen flour.

Q.: Are you accustomed to conjure with salt? *A.:* Sometimes, to cure sick persons. That is no sin.

Q.: Are you accustomed to conjure over sick cattle? *A.* (after some hesitation): Yes.

Q.: What words did you use for that purpose? *A.:* These words: "The holy Virgin complained, my

*Open, Lord God, thy ears, and let the thief get his reward.

cow is sick and badly off; it shall be cured, said Jesus. Jesus went up on a burning mountain, and saw the weird woman. I charge you, weird woman, to restore to me my own, full as an egg, red as a flower, before three sunsets, signed and crossed." This was recorded.

Q.: Can you improve the brewing, and what do you use for it? *A.:* I take juniper, mountain-ash, and heather, cut them fine, and boil in water. With this I have the brewing-vessels cleansed.

Q.: Can you also procure good luck in churning, and how? *A.:* I put a pebble in boiling water, and clean the churn with it. This is no sin.

Many witnesses were produced, and testified that this had been done. They were earnestly admonished to refrain from such superstitious practices. The Arvio women protested with tears that they would never use such means again.

Q.: Did you not once intrude upon a wedding-party and threaten to change them into wolves? *A.:* I was invited by the hostess, but was driven out of doors by the host. When some of the guests threw stones after me, I said to them: "You behave like wild wolves in the woods."

Witnesses were called, who testified that Jane had cried to them: "I wish you were wolves!" Then one of the young men who had thrown stones rushed, with loud cries and violent gestures, in amongst the wedding guests and attempted to bite some of them; but he grew sane again when the minister had read over him. To this Jane answered that the boy was drunk with ale; this was denied; and the testimony was recorded.

Q.: Is it true that you have ridden on the back of a cow, and afterwards dried up the animal's milk, not restoring it again? *A.:* I have never done so.

Witnesses testified that they had seen Jane spit upon butter, and it had immediately been burned up.

When she was in the village it often happened that the cattle stopped and looked at her. Which was recorded.

The trial proceeded now to the most important part of the accusation—the excursions to Brocken. During the proceedings the room had become filled almost to overflowing by the many witnesses, for the most part women and children, and on all faces were read the changing expressions of terror, detestation, and intense curiosity. It was just such monstrous trials, conducted in full earnest by men who in all respects were regarded as sensible and reputable, which effectively contributed to strengthen and spread the belief in the terrible reality of witchcraft.

Q.: Is it true that on Easter nights, as well as at various other times, you have flown to Brocken and served the devil, and induced little innocent children to commit the same great sin? and how has this been done? *A.:* I have never done it. What people say about it is mere superstition and idle gossip. God will be the witness of my truthfulness.

She was again admonished to confess, and made the same reply.

Witnesses were called. The first, the wife of a miller, testified that one Whitsuntide she had slept one night in the mill while her husband was away. At midnight she was awakened by the devil and all his angels flying along with a great noise, and right behind them came four or five witches, among them Black Jane, riding on broomsticks, and carrying on their backs bundles of stolen wool. Then the devil weighed the wool on a false steelyard, and found it too little, and he knocked the witches in the back with the steelyard, and said to them: "*Dubbadera, dubbadera!*" When the witches came, they said: "Now we are here, Master!" And when they left: "Now we go away, Master!" And each time they addressed the evil one they said: "Will the devil stay?" And he had answered: "The devil stays." And the whole night through there had

been a strange buzzing and roaring of the water-wheel, but the witness had laid in a corner and drawn empty meal-bags over her head. When asked how then she could see or hear anything, she answered that she sometimes peeped out in great fear. Then she fell asleep in terror ; and when she awoke, the visitation was over, and the mill was quiet. This was recorded.

Several witnesses testified, some that they had seen and some that they had heard the witches riding through the air at Easter, Black Jane among them. This was seen most plainly from the roof of houses which had been moved three times. And each time the witches made themselves ready to fly, they smeared themselves with ointment from a goat-horn, and repeated : "Up and down, and nowhere strike." Whereupon they flew like birds up through the chimney, in safety. But one had by mistake said : "Up and down, and everywhere strike ;" and she had knocked against walls and trees, and had thus been crushed to death. And if they came too near a church spire in their flight, they were immediately attracted by it and crushed against it ; etc., etc.

After the witnesses had several times been earnestly admonished to mention only what concerned Jane, a number of them testified that their children had been absent at night, nobody knew where, and a piece of wood or a stone had been placed in their beds. And when the children had returned next morning, and been asked if they had been at Brocken last night, they answered yes ; and when asked if Black Jane had taken them there, they had also, with tears, said yes. The mothers were now told to produce these children, which they did ; and it was evident that the children were terrified at sight of the accused woman, and many of them could not be persuaded to open their mouths until Jane had been removed to the outer room.

The substance of the confused statements of the children was about as follows : Jane had taken them

from their beds at night and carried them through the air to Brocken. There were many rooms there, and great splendor. A big black fellow baptized the children in hot water; then he tapped their blood, wrote with it on a piece of paper, and taught them to read it. He had put little children into a kettle and skimmed the grease off, while it boiled; others he had crushed into powder, and made an ointment for the witches. Jane meanwhile had horns on her feet, and had tried to pull them out, each time exclaiming: "Damned horn, which will not come off!" One evening she had put on feathers and had flown about the children like a magpie. At Brocken there was an angel-chamber, where prayers were said and hymns were sung; but the children were not allowed to get in there. The big black fellow taught them to read the articles of faith backward, and those who did it best were rewarded with gold pennies, which next morning were only faded leaves; etc., etc.

Finally the three children who had been at Jane's house on the night in the Rogation-week were called, and made the following statement: Jane had flown before them like a crow, and enticed them into the woods. Thence she had taken them to Brocken, and there they had seen the evil one grinning at them like a skull. Then she had given them food on gold plates, but the eldest girl had said grace, and thereby the food had been changed into ugly worms. Soon after, the devil appeared, entirely black, and with him a witch. They had bargained with Jane for the souls of the children, but could not agree as to the price, and had flown away with great black wings. Jane flew in the same manner after them; and then the children ran away and found a boat at the strand. In this they rowed many hundred miles over a large sea, and a man found them, half dead with hunger, in the woods.

After this statement, Jane was called, the record was read to her, and she was asked what answer she

would make. Every one expected to hear her obstinately deny, as she had done before ; but a remarkable change had taken place with the unfortunate woman during the few last hours. Her sufferings had exhausted her strength ; what the testimony of all the rest had not been able to perform, the statements of the little children had effected. When she heard them, she trembled in all limbs, glanced wildly around, and answered, scarce audibly : "It must be so, since even the children say it."

"She confesses!" sounded from all lips, and all faces expressed an amazement and abhorrence greater, if possible, than before, when the witch would not confess. Even the judges could not repress a shudder.

"You confess, then," said the president, "that you have kept company with the prince of darkness?"

"Yes."

"That you have bewitched man and beast by means of simple sorcery?"

"Yes."

"That you, from a hard heart and evil purpose, have seduced little children into all kinds of deviltry, have flown with them through the air to Brocken, have betrayed them, sold them, and delivered them to the enemy of man?"

"Yes. Since the children say so, I must certainly have done it."

A silence of several minutes followed this fatal confession. Then Olof Wallenius, a man sixty years of age, associate in the court, arose, with a flush of indignation on his venerable brow, and asked attention.

"It has seemed to me for some time," he said, "that I have been sitting in a company of gossiping old women, and not in a serious court of wise judges who pass sentence with reason and conscience, according to the laws of God and man. It must be evident to anyone having eyes and ears, that all these witnesses are under the influence of some gross superstition,

so that, while sincere enough in their beliefs, they are infected with all kinds of miserable delusions from the father of lies. Nor will I deny that some things may be true which both learned and unlearned nowadays tell about the craftiness of the devil ; yet most of it is mere nonsense and ignorance. And I wonder greatly that the members of the court have taken no notice whatever of the fact that this woman, who has hitherto denied everything, has done so while she was perfectly sane—far more so than any of you. But now, after having been worn out bodily by inhuman captivity and bewildered mentally by all the perverse testimony against her, it is more than she can bear that the children have testified to all kinds of wickedness against her ; and hence, worn out in body and soul, she has lost possession of her senses and confessed herself guilty of deeds she has never done. Therefore I protest against the examination of an insane person, and deny that her confession has any effect, until, through the testimony of expert physicians, it shall be shown to what extent she has been competent to stand a trial and be justly responsible for her confession of witchcraft."

Such noble and enlightened views sometimes shine out from the blind superstition of that period, but only to make the surrounding darkness appear still darker to after times. The speech of Wallenius was followed by commotion and dissension in the court. Some took his side, but most were of a quite different mind. The witnesses and the accused woman were sent away ; and after a violent discussion, the court settled down to the resolution—not, as the reader may suppose, to get the testimony of physicians as to the prisoner's sanity, but to have her shoulders examined, in order to ascertain if they bore the usual mark of witchcraft. And indeed, it was found that upon Jane's right shoulder were two lines forming a cross ; and this mark was considered such conclusive evidence that no exception could be admitted.

But we will hasten by this dark picture of the barbarism of our ancestors. After due deliberation and discussion, sentence was passed, with no opposing vote but Wallenius's, to the effect that whereas the witch Jane, of Augsburg, known as Black Jane, had through lawful proofs and her own confession, been clearly convicted of the heathenish sin of witchcraft, keeping company with the devil, and the seduction of Christian children, and furthermore, in her papistical unbelief, to have grossly insulted the most reverend bishop and the pure evangelical faith: therefore she, Jane of Augsburg, was sentenced, for the salvation of her own soul and as an example of terror and warning to others, to be burned, after due preparation, at the stake, in view of the Christian community; which sentence was passed in Åbo, the tenth day of September, one thousand six hundred and seventy-one years after the birth of Christ.

The news of this sentence, which instantly spread over the whole town, was received with cheers of exultation by the curious crowd in the market-place.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAVES OF ERSTAN.

IT is said of Autumn, that she is a spirit of dreariness and gloom; and sometimes she may be so; and melancholy she is always, for she lives in the memory of the joys which have been and are no more. Even when she smiles, it is a smile so wan, as it were only a veiled sorrow; and when she is most beautiful, it is a dying beauty, that looks around once more with heavenly eyes at the moment of farewell.

But still unutterably lovely is the Autumn, when the yellow birches, the red mountain-ash, and the many-colored aspens, stand beside the evergreen pines upon the shore of a mirroring lake—when the evening sun sinks, as blessedly as some good spirit, down into the embrace of night, and an inexpressible and serene glory descends upon the silent waters and the fading shores. It is Nature's grand resignation, her patient, peaceful, radiant glance toward death—for she knows that even in death she is indestructible, and that new springs will arise gently from the ashes of the past. Such a glorious and transporting autumn evening is always prophetic of a life beyond the grave. Mortal, why complain that thy habitation is destroyed and the blooms of life so quickly wither? Behold me! I am mild and patient, and I die smiling and tranquil; for hope dies not with me—she lives eternally, and I too shall live, and the purest blossoms of my spirit shall live with me, never more to fade.

And such a touchingly beautiful evening it was now, two weeks after the dark events we have just narrated. Alone in one of the prison-cells of Åbo castle, sat the condemned Jane, the evening before she was to be burned at the stake. Her window overlooked the fiord, and beyond it the waves of Erstan appeared glimmering in the splendor of sunset. The red light came in through the narrow grated window, and tinged the opposite wall with rosy hues; and as the lustre was reflected from the gently heaving waves, the sheen on the wall quivered with a graceful motion, so lovely that the immovable wall itself seemed to vibrate and shimmer as though it had been made of the brightest rubies. Jane looked upon it, with what emotions He knows whose gaze pierces the dark; perhaps she thought of her glad days of childhood upon the shores of Lech, and the glow of sunset upon the prison wall was the last joy of memory which follows the unfortunate to the boundaries of life.

As Jane sat quietly contemplating the evening light, the door was slowly opened, and an old man, of still powerful frame although his hair was white, entered the room. He touched Jane lightly upon the shoulder.

"Are you asleep?" said he.

Jane looked up, and recognized Master Adam, the former tyrant of Majniemi. But she did not answer.

"Listen to me," continued the old man, without noticing her indifference. "You have come to this, Jane, because you would not harken to my advice, and share the treasure with me. Now you see the sun setting for the last time; they are already erecting your stake outside the city gate; and it has cost me gold, much gold, to get admission to you. For whom will you now hide your treasure longer? You have no children, no family; you have heard nothing from parents or sisters or brothers for more than thirty years. Be sensible for once, Jane, and show me the place where the treasure is. As a reward, I will help you to escape this very night."

Jane looked for a moment at the old man. "What use will you make of my treasure?" said she, slowly and almost hesitatingly.

"What use? Oh—I will gather it in my cellar; I want gold, more, more gold! without gold I cannot live. You do not know, Jane, what it is to hunger and thirst for the yellow metal. When I was younger, many passions raged within my soul—I could love, and hate, and take revenge, and kill; now I am as quiet as a lamb, cold as a rock, without love and without hate. Only that single thread still binds me to life: gold! gold! I must have more gold. Do you hear? I must have your treasure, or you shall be burned tomorrow."

"You will never have it," said Jane, shortly.

"Do not say that; have mercy, Jane! do you see, I shall have no peace, neither on earth nor in the tomb,

so long as I know that such great riches might be mine and are not. What do you wish me to do to get them? You are a Catholic; do you wish me to give a portion to your convents in Bavaria?"

"No," answered Jane, "these riches were plundered from convents and churches, with sin and violence, and they shall return to convents and churches. But not you, unworthy man, shall perform this deed of blessedness. They are hidden in three places. One has already been dug up. I have given the smallest of the treasures to Bertelsköld; and I know that therefore he has donated a crown of fine silver to the cathedral of Augsburg. The other two shall rest in the earth until . . . ."

"What do you say?"

"Until Finland has returned to the bosom of the Roman-Catholic Church."

"Reflect, Jane! What you say is impossible. To whom can you confide the secret where the treasures are buried?"

"The Holy Virgin knows."

"Jane, Jane! give me your gold—it haunts my thoughts, it weighs upon my soul! Jane, give me your gold!"

"Convert all Finland, and I will give it to you."

"Then burn at the stake, miserable witch!" exclaimed the old man, rushing out.

Jane was alone. She fell upon her knees and prayed. Rosary and crucifix had been taken from her; but upon the place where the light, reflected from the waves, played upon the prison wall, she had scratched a small cross. Before this she knelt; it gleamed before her eyes like a golden crucifix, and she believed it was. It was a beautiful illusion, and yet at this moment she was insane no longer.

The sun set, the shadows grew heavier and heavier over the region, and the narrow prison grew darker. Jane remained kneeling before the cross, which she

could see no more. She prayed, the hapless woman, for the conversion of Finland.

Then the door was once more gently opened ; the figure of a woman entered, wrapped in a large cloak, and cautiously closed the door behind her.

" Jane," she whispered, " do you know me ? "

" Greta ! " exclaimed the old woman, springing up and falling upon the neck of the new-comer. " Your father has just been to see me and to beg my gold. Do you also come to tempt me ? "

" Speak low, Jane, that the jailor outside in the corridor may not hear us. I have come to save you. Quick ! take this cloak, wrap my kerchief about your head, and walk as erect as you can. Open the door ; and if you meet the jailor, drop this gold-piece in his hand, but take care not to let your hand touch his, or he will notice that it is not I. When you afterwards pass the guard at the castle gate, give him this other gold-piece —here ! Right outside the gateway, Bertelsköld and my husband are waiting for you. They will take you to the beach ; a boat is ready, and our vessel is at anchor near by in the fiord. This very night it will sail with you to Åland, and from there another vessel will start to-morrow for Dantzig. Hasten ! there is no time to lose."

" And you, Greta,—what will become of you ? "

" I shall remain in your place. Do you suppose they will burn me instead of you ? "

" But surely you know, Greta, that I am a wicked sorceress, who bewitches both beasts and men ? Take care ! you have little children ; I might repay you for my salvation by leading your children to destruction."

" People have believed evil things of you, Jane, but I know you better. You have meddled with vain things, but you have meant no harm."

The witch pressed the hands of the young woman firmly in hers.

"Then you do not believe that I have changed men into wolves?" she said.

"No, you never did that."

"And I have not taken little children to Brocken?"

"Never, Jane; they have lied about you."

"And I am still a human being, and have a human heart, and have not horns on my feet and wings on my shoulders and hell in my soul?"

"You are a human being, like all of us, poor Jane."

"Thanks, thanks!" exclaimed the old woman, bending down and kissing the hem of Greta's dress. "Yes, now I know it; I am a human being, like the rest of you, and I have a God, like you; there was a time when I did not believe this. For, see, Greta! they have treated me like a wild beast. And I shall again see my country, my beautiful Bavaria, the rivers of my childhood, the green vineyards of my youth, and the church spires of old Augsburg? How shall I thank you, child?"

"Hasten, Jane; time passes, and the guards I bribed might be relieved."

"Yes, yes . . . . . God bless you, child!"

And the old woman hurried away, concealed under the wide cloak.

But when Greta was left alone in the dark, she folded her hands and prayed:

"Thou merciful God! forgive me that I have sinned against the civil law; thy law will not condemn me nor her. She was a mother to me, and I have acted toward her as a daughter. And I myself am a mother. Forgive my human prayer; protect me now; save me for my children."

But across the fiord a boat soon after danced toward the waiting vessel. At the rudder sat the proud nobleman; and crouching upon the bottom of the boat was the poor persecuted witch of Majniemi. They reached the vessel, whose white sails waited impatiently to be spread to the morning breeze. And the moon's

disc hung high over the mountains, and formed upon the calm surface of the water a long tremulous column of light. Jane bent over the railing, and gazed with strange and prophetic vision down into the slowly heaving sea, which rose and sank in long crested waves, although the wind was still.

"What do you read in the waves of Erstan?" asked Bertelsköld, lightly touching the old woman's arm.

"The future of Finland," answered Jane, in a low voice.

"And what is this future?" continued the count, with mingled curiosity and uneasiness.

Jane looked at him sharply. "Long sorrows and late joys, eternal struggle and eternal reward, darkness and at last light," answered she, with prophetic earnestness.

Count Bertelsköld smiled. "Go and rest, poor Jane," said he; "the spirit of sorcery still has power over you. But on the free grand sea no stakes are burning; on its shining surface no unjust sentences are written."

And the night came and passed.

The next morning the stake was ready, and all Åbo was astir to see the burning of the witch. But the bird had flown, and the cage was empty. The great crowd raged over its baffled curiosity. But the judges urged no severe measures; Greta was released, with some angry words; the guards were brought before a court-martial. The good gentlemen of the court, men of honor in spite of their own prejudices and those of their time, divined perhaps that the future would judge, more mildly than they, the witch of Majniemi.

PART III.—MAJNIEMI CASTLE.

INTERLUDE.

WHEN the Surgeon had finished his story of the king's hunt and the witch's trial, his auditors seemed in a gloomy frame of mind. The fire had burned down in the large fire-place, the wick of the single candle was smoking, and the Surgeon's long musket threw strange shadows upon the wall beside the powder-horn and the game-bag. The narrator himself sat mute; the pretty Anne Sophie did not observe that the pair of suspenders she had been working for her betrothed had fallen to the floor; cousin Svanholm abstractedly twisted his mustaches; cousin Svenonius, with an air of importance, scraped the last grains of snuff from his emptied box; and the old grandmother, who, with her fresh and practical mind, usually dwelt more in the real than in the fantastic world, had unconsciously formed the foot of her stocking some inches longer than could be required by the well-shaped human foot.

At length the old lady broke the silence: "I must say, cousin, that this was a doleful story. It was well that I sent the children away when you reached the part about Black Jane. It is easy to be frightened by less cause than that. And although I, for my part, do not doubt that mysterious things take place, which our blind reason vainly tries to explain, yet I must declare, cousin, that such odious things as witchcraft and conjurings are abominable superstitions in the mind of any Christian."

"Well, well," replied Captain Svanholm, pompously,

"a man may be a good Christian, and yet, under certain circumstances, make the acquaintance of the devil. Cowardly, I never was; the man who says so is a villain; and I might tell you something of Karstula . . . . . "

"Where you, brother, had such nimble legs," interrupted Svenonius.

"Sir!" exploded the captain, but restrained himself instantly, for, through force of habit, the schoolmaster's malicious interruptions were becoming as harmless as the poison of Mithridates. "I mean to say," continued he, still a little gruffly, "that I once knew an old woman in Åbo, who was a witch, and foretold the revolution of 1809, the war of 1812, the fall of Napoleon, and the death of Charles XIII from coffee-grounds."

Svenonius had evidently a new taunt on his lips, when the Surgeon, with his usual mild manner, half earnest and half jest, replied: "Brother Svanholm is right; I have in my youth seen strange things in the cards of Mamsell Arfvidsson, and in Paris I once saw the devil's smartest pupil. She was called, I remember, Mamsell Lenormand!"

Anne Sophie, who sometimes read the newspapers, felt an immense curiosity suddenly coming over her. "Dear, good godfather," exclaimed she, vivaciously, "tell us something about Mamsell Lenormand!"

"Yes, do, cousin," said grandmother, who shared with her granddaughter the amiable weakness of the sex and of humanity—curiosity. "What did you say, cousin—Lenormand?"

"It was one dark and chilly November night," began the Surgeon. "If I remember right, it was just before Advent, which is the proper time for ghostly proceedings. In a deserted street of Paris, the muffled strokes of the church-clock sounded the hour of midnight . . . . . "

At these words, Anne Sophie sprang up with a cry of

horror, and her cheeks, usually so rosy, suddenly grew quite pale. The Surgeon paused in the midst of his story, and all eyes turned in the direction of Anne Sophie's.

"Something moved in that dark corner," she said.

The Surgeon arose, without changing his expression, and went over to the corner.

"Here is the cane, Brother Bäck, here is the cane!" exclaimed Svanholm, whose martial mind was unwilling that his old friend should go unarmed into a fight with unknown enemies. But the Surgeon fearlessly thrust his hand behind the Öresund fur cloak which hung peacefully on a hook in the dangerous region, and got hold of something not belonging to the cloak.

"Come out, sir!" The object resisted, but it soon became evident that the Surgeon held the little yelling Jonathan by the hair.

"What!" said grandma; "did you not go with Andreas and the others?"

"I wanted . . . . . ," said the boy, snivelling, "I wanted to hear godfather tell about Black Jane and the children at Brocken . . . . . and so I crept behind the cloak and heard it all. And afterwards, when godfather began telling about spooks, I stuck my head out and . . . . . "

"Yes; then I saw the cloak move," interrupted Anne Sophie, somewhat vexed.

"Go now, and do not listen again," said grandmother sternly. "To-night we will let you off with the hair-pulling you have had."

Jonathan looked toward the door, but did not stir from the spot. "I am afraid to go through the garret in the dark," he said at last, in a low voice.

"Light him out, Anne Sophie," replied grandmother. "This comes of letting children hear things unsuited to their age."

"I think we would better leave Mamsell Lenormand till another time," said the Surgeon.

"Yes," remarked Svenonius, "or else Brother Svanholm will not dare to cross the garret without a cane."

Svanholm growled in his mustaches, but said nothing.

"I have some questions to ask you, cousin, about the last story," said grandmother, thoughtfully. "That witchcraft and sorcery were once more common in the popular belief than now, is beyond all question. But that real trials were held, and sometimes human beings were burned at the stake, here in Finland, on account of sorcery—pardon me, cousin, but is not that a little romance of which everyone believes as much as he likes?"

"I will not dictate anyone's belief," answered the Surgeon, a little ill-humoredly; "nor do I deny that all the names and details which I mention will be looked for in vain in the chronicles. For my idea about story-telling is that its truth consists in its possibility of being true, by its agreeing with the essential characteristics of what is to be described. I will even go so far as to say that in this way the reality may sometimes be more clearly shown than by a mere record of events. I can, for instance, picture Napoleon eating a sandwich —*posito*, that I have really seen him eating a sandwich; can I therefore say that I have given a good picture of Napoleon? But suppose I invent about him some great exploit which never really happened, but which is entirely like him; or that I put in his mouth some strong word which he never uttered, but which corresponds to a hair with his actual temperament: is not that which I have imagined more essentially real than the small sandwich, which is real only by chance? Well, so it is with Black Jane and her trial for sorcery in Åbo. I tell you, cousin, it is perfectly certain, and cannot be doubted, that witches have really been burned in our country, and that the proceedings at

their trials have been about as I have described. But although the matter is incontestable as a fact, I willingly concede that there is more than one obscure point in it—for instance, how anything so extremely irrational could take place generations after Finland had a university."

"It was the prince of darkness who was angered by the light of evangelical belief," remarked the schoolmaster.

"Brother Svenonius does like many others—he makes it all the fault of the poor devil," replied the Surgeon. "But I believe that the explanation in this, as in so many other things, must be sought in man himself. Here in the North, customs and ideas are very tenacious. I fancy that the Catholic faith, which in its nature is a blind faith, in opposition to the evangelical faith, which is an enlightened faith, even a hundred years after the Reformation was clinging obstinately to the mind, so that while the church was Lutheran in form and spirit, the belief of the common people was at bottom Catholic. We must not forget that the Bible was at that time a great curiosity in the Swedish language, and was first fully translated into Finnish in 1642. Now, I hold that so long as Lutheranism was in its first youthful ardor, equipped with both the shield of faith and the weapons of this world, so long as there was in it a living spirit, the relics of Catholicism felt instinctively that they were driven back by a great spiritual power, and struggled, but not wildly or violently, against it. And yet it is well known that some time after the Thirty Years' War, a mental and physical lassitude overcame Lutheranism, so that while the outward faith retained its full strength—the psalm-book of 1695 proves that—yet the spirit had departed from the ceremonies of the church, weary of the miserable contests of learned men over dead letters. The old blind traditions of Catholicism felt this also instinctively—for the people are only a child, which does

not reason, but only feels and acts—and they thereby got the power to erect their last mad stakes against witchcraft. But witchcraft was a phœnix that rose new-born and stronger from every stake; and thus its existence gained a certain lawful recognition, and when prayers were offered against it in the churches, there was an implication that witchcraft had become an article of faith, and all doubt of it was heresy. Mark how Lutheranism thus became faithless to itself, and how the scourge of God fell upon it! . . . . But this subject of conversation is immensely rich, especially here in Finland, where witchcraft is an inherited sin; and therefore we will for the present leave it for what it is worth. Meanwhile I can not deny that the contemplation of it is grand and wild, and strikes everybody with terror. For what is the petty superstition of our days compared with that raging sickness of the soul which in the seventeenth century seized so many thousands, and had a full and terrible reality in the minds of both executioner and victim—yes, even in the halls of learning, in the courts of justice, and on the thrones of kings! Have you any snuff left in your box, Brother Svenonius?"

"*Ne gutta quidem*—not a grain."

"Thank you, Anne Sophie, my pullet, I can fill the pipe myself. To say the truth, I am glad that we have passed safely through our witchcraft; for a gloomy chapter in our stories is now closed, although it really continued a long time after the period we have just described, even into the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, but it flamed up only at intervals, and eventually extinguished itself. I think we shall have other things to think of in the next story, for now the Great Reduction comes hand in hand with the autocracy, whereby not only the landed interests, but the whole internal conditions of Sweden and Finland were greatly changed. And afterwards we reach the beginning of a new period, which opened with the

most terrible calamities that our country ever suffered ; and it will be no easy task to keep in good spirits through it all."

"I propose, cousin," replied grandmother, somewhat dismayed, "that we quietly pass by that time and let it sleep in its bloody tomb. What use will it be to tear open old wounds? For my part, I never go to the theatre to see a tragedy ; we have plenty of occasion to weep in this life, without that. Pardon me, cousin : I like to take pleasure in what I see and hear, and therefore I prefer comedies, which always end as they should, with one or two decent marriages."

"And a little fighting mixed in, and some stout fellow with pluck in his body," exclaimed Svanholm, thinking of "Johanna of Montfaucon," which he had lately seen represented by Wiederberg's troupe. "'Lazarra asks, where he might command,'" added he, under his mustache, to himself.

"Classical works, first of all!" Svenonius made this reservation with a learned air.

"But a few brigands also, and a good deal of heroism!" remarked Anne Sophie, who had wept with delight over "Hedvig, or the Bandit's Bride," and never could forget "The Guardian Angel," of Carl Lindegren.

"I suppose that a grander drama than that of the great war period has never been seen here in the North," said the Surgeon. "But fortunately we are still some distance from that, and the next time we shall only see the curtain fall over the struggles of the seventeenth century. It was a rich century, and I must confess that I leave it with regret. That century had a body and soul alike gigantic in strength, a heart and head equally developed ; therefore it furnishes a perfect picture. But the eighteenth century had a weaker body for its great soul, a colder heart for its brilliant head ; therefore it is more to be admired than loved. I will not speak of Charles XII and Peter the

Great—for both these robust fellows had sucked the mother-milk of the seventeenth century. But please to place Frederick I beside Gustaf Adolf, and I fear he would seem small of stature; and I doubt if all the sermons of Lehnberg would outweigh a single powerful word of Bishop Rothovius, or a single hymn of old Spegel. Anne Sophie, my dear, snuff the candle."

Grandma had fallen into deep meditation, and the Surgeon doubtless believed that she was reflecting on the difference between Gustaf Adolf and Frederick I. But when he paused, she was heard to inquire, rather abruptly:

"That story about the Princess Juliana was also a piece of fiction, I suppose? Was it ever really intended to make her the Queen of Sweden?"

"Well, my good cousin, to that I can only reply, as was once said: 'I will swear to it, but I will not bet.' What I know is that people believed so, and that she was well liked by Queen Hedvig Eleonora, who also desired it, and certainly succeeded in more difficult things."

"You alluded, cousin, to her later fate. I must say that I felt sorry for the poor girl, although I fear that she was somewhat giddy."

"She inherited that from her mother, the Pfaltz-countess Eleonora Katherina. I shall be silent about the later adventures of the pretty princess; it is enough to know that she finally married the son of a shop-keeping widow, whom the king ennobled with the name of Liljenborg. You see, cousin, that the play ends with a marriage; yet I doubt if it is either pleasant or edifying."

"And Count Bernhard Bertelsköld, what has become of him?" asked grandmother, glad to escape from a subject which threatened to become too delicate.

"We shall learn in the next story," replied the Surgeon.

* * * * * *

"Twenty-four years have passed since we left the witch of Majniemi on the clear water-mirror of Erstan. Much has since grown old which then was young; much has faded which was then in bloom. The new has come, the old has passed away; new and bright eyes now peep from under the flaxen locks of the children in Finland's cottages; other maidens now pluck the blue flowers in Finland's meadows. The transforming and renewing hand of time has been laid upon human fortunes; great changes have affected society—happily, from within and for the better, and slowly and calmly, like all great changes that affect our earth. Events that are really great make little stir. They are like the spring sunshine, which silently thaws the frozen fields and the hard ice, beams upon them with the gentle warmth of love, and they cannot resist it. All the swords and axes in the world could not hew asunder the ice on Finland's lakes; and yet they melt in the blithe smile of spring. In vain hate pours out its venom, in vain violence puts forth its giant strength; love o'ermasters them; it alone can raise the fallen, and bind together the broken, and give life to the dead; it alone builds the world anew.

"Between the years 1671 and 1695 was a period of almost a quarter of a century, comprising the beginning and the end of the reign of Charles XI. This period was in many respects a spring above the winter snow. Autocracy, it is true, cast its shadow over many of the relations of society; there was not a little of internal strife and of party hatreds and injustice; triumph and glory were followed by a long dark autumn night, of devastating storms, which delayed for centuries the ripening of the fruits of the past into harvest: yet amidst all these shadows, a great and inspiring spirit controlled the reign of Charles XI; while the nation was accumulating resources soon to be wasted, a new life was awakening in the centre of the social system, which was preserved amidst the storms

and became the germ from which resulted those forces that at a later period were the good fortune of the Swedish and Finnish North . . . . . "

At these words, the Surgeon paused, as though unwilling to tear himself from the grand scenes to return to the humbler ones. Then he looked around with a pleasant smile, and said :

" Now we will go back to Majniemi, for something important is occurring there."

CHAPTER I.

THE STEWARD.

IT was a sunny day in the middle of June, 1695. The winter, from October previous, had been so unusually cold that its equal had not been known since the year 1658, when Charles X marched over Little Belt. After this iron winter, which caused much misery over all Europe, the spring was so late that even in the latter part of May the ground was still frozen, and the despairing farmer vainly waited day after day for milder weather to sow his spring seed. At length, toward midsummer, the ground had become thawed, and in all the fertile fields around Majniemi castle were seen the tenants, with happier faces, scattering seed in the ploughed grounds. Man hopes to the last ; perhaps a warm and fertile summer would yet reward the labor of the tiller.

But within the castle and the extended buildings surrounding it, attention was diverted in another direction. A great industry had been developed in fitting and cleaning the large rooms, magnificent, but already a little dilapidated ; for the owner of the castle,

Count Bernhard Bertelsköld, had visited his father's castle only three or four times in the last twenty-five years, and each time only for a few months. Here there was much to be done, before the rooms could be restored to the magnificence which suited the owner's rank, pomp, and wealth. All kinds of handicraftsmen, some sent there from Stockholm, some even from Germany, had for two weeks been occupied in the repair of the castle; and beside them worked honest masters and journeymen from Åbo, sent there for the same purpose, not without some shaking of their fists—many a time with the old national Perkele on their tongues—in the faces of the presumptuous new-comers, who considered the Finnish workmen far below them both in rank and skill. The good masters from Åbo were themselves accustomed, here in the country, to be considered superior, and many a one among them had in his youth wandered through Germany with a knapsack on his back and a cudgel in his hand, afterwards putting their experiences into all sorts of lusty journeymen songs. It was therefore pardonable if they looked upon themselves as having travelled as much and gained as much knowledge as the foreigners, and hence were not slow, when occasion offered, at retorting with either the tongue, the trowel, or the brush.

Sometimes, when the disputes were carried too far, the steward of the estate was obliged to interfere, usually as a peacemaker, though sometimes as a punisher. It will perhaps be somewhat difficult for us to recognize the short and strongly-built man of thirty years, in his blue homespun jacket with large polished brass buttons, and gray felt hat covering his light hair, and shading a pair of honest blue eyes, and a calm, good-natured, but yet determined face. We may therefore as well state first as last, that we have made his acquaintance before, under entirely different circumstances—namely, in the parsonage of Saltvik, and at the peasant wedding in Sund, where King Charles XI,

in his boyhood, hunted *incognito*. It was really the same fine little Pehr, who was presented with an Öland pony in place of his crushed wooden horse, and who afterwards—poor little fellow !—so innocently happened to hurl an intended queen from the throne of Sweden. It was the first and the last time in his life that our Pehr had interfered in affairs of state. But he still retained a great fondness for horses, and had more than once teased his parents for permission to join the cavalry—a project which both father and mother promptly vetoed. So, as Pehr had no notion, like his elder brothers, to study for the ministry, he was heartily glad, at the age of sixteen, to become a groom for Count Bertelsköld. Here he came into great favor on account of his fidelity and trustworthiness ; he learned much during his travels abroad, and although Finland had at that time no Mustiala, our Pehr was in his twenty-eighth year found to be qualified for the vacant office of steward at Majniemi. He accepted the place with all the more delight because his father, the good old man, had obtained the parsonage, which was at Bertelsköld's disposal.

It was plain that a different spirit now ruled Majniemi from that which prevailed in the time of Master Adam. The count, it is true, still needed money—always more money ; but fortunately he had other resources than Majniemi to draw from, and the petitions of the vicar and the reports of Master Pehr induced the count to remit a great deal of the day's-works and other feudal impositions which had hitherto ruined the poor tenants. The region about Majniemi would scarcely have been recognized. Instead of ragged and famished figures, with hate and unhappiness depicted in their gloomy features, were now seen cheerful faces, and dresses whole though simple ; there were horses for every load,—no longer, as before, human beings forced by the whip of the taskmaster to draw the burdens. Disappeared also were the miserable old huts

which gave a forlorn aspect to the whole region around the magnificent castle, and in their stead were comfortable and well-built houses, with regular windows of glass, hitherto a great luxury, and also regular fireplaces, which formerly had been but rare exceptions. A comfort previously unknown had found its way into the peasants' homes, and with it had come not only outward improvement but also industry, piety, and a more peaceful course of life, in place of the former laziness, obstinacy, and wild habits. A great and noble work had been wrought on the once unfortunate Majniemi: the peasant, till then treated but little better than a serf, had regained his rights and thereby his worth as a human being. And as in all times humanity and gentleness, far more than severity and slavery, bring forth beneficent fruits, even in external things, so had the marvel also been seen that Majniemi gradually began to yield a better income under the freer and gentler government than Master Adam had succeeded in scraping together, although he mercilessly wrung out the last penny and the last working-power of the people.

In the back-yard of the castle, near the seashore, were long rows of comfortable outbuildings, a stable for fifty horses, a barn for a hundred cows, the quarters of the working men and servant-girls, the brewery, the bakery, and the laundry. Everywhere was the same activity as in the castle. Everywhere were repair and cleaning—baking, brewing, and washing. The bustle and hurry foretold important events. Now and then a worthy and good-natured matron, in a blue woollen jacket, tripped busily from one place to another, as though to inspect the many kinds of work. If one of the girls had been asked who was the fine old lady who ran so easily upstairs and downstairs in spite of her corpulence, the girl would have quickly answered:

"You really ought to know that it is the dear mother from the parsonage, who is helping her son in his duties."

And so it was ; we meet here more than one good friend from old times. The dear mother from the parsonage was now about fifty-six years of age, but had, notwithstanding her fourteen children, of whom ten were living, preserved not a little of her youth's activity and blooming health besides her prudent head and her glad, pious, and tender heart. The young swimmer of seventeen in Majniemi sound, the hostess of thirty-two at the king's visit to Saltvik parsonage, was the same hearty and excellent Greta who now, the honored mistress of the simple red parsonage near the church, had come to help her son, Master Pehr, with his duties at Majniemi. The snow of the passing years had fallen very gently upon the pretty head ; scarcely a single stray thread of silver had stolen in among the once luxuriant blond hair ; scarcely a single wrinkle had ploughed its furrow in the open, light, ingenuous forehead. The blue eyes looked still as clear, the fresh lips smiled still as kindly ; only a single one of the milk-white teeth was gone, and the step, once so light, had acquired a heaviness from her increasing weight. Youth passes, the years destroy ; but the beauty of the heart gains a new purity which survives the roses of the cheeks, the first smile of love, and even time itself.

In the wash-house they were busily engaged in mangling some fine Holland table-linen which for years had yellowed in the closets, but were now to be prepared for use. Mangling is hard work, both in pulling and pushing, and a quick and accustomed hand is often needed to spread out the linen. Perhaps it was for this reason that some of the washwomen who had the easier task of spreading out the linen and smoothing it before it came under the rolls, thought it their duty to entertain their mangling companions, and themselves in the bargain, with a conversation, in which they certainly did not appear tongue-tied

"You may say what you will, Brita," said one of the most authoritative of the group, "I have seen

washings before in my day. Who was it that for so many, many years washed the nightcaps of the late bishop and mended his stockings, and perhaps more than once starched his bishop's-collar when he stood there—God rest his soul—as reverend as Aaron before Israel? Well, it was just I, by your leave; and it shall not be said of me that I mistake Holland damask for Stockholm linen. And if the gracious mistress does not feel satisfied with my washing, and if she despises the best table-cloths which were ever spread under a roasted pig on a Finnish table, then I will tell her what the bishop's wife used to say: the bishop's wife did not think herself too good to be condescending to poor people, although equal in dignity to princes . . ."

"Your washing, Mother Sanna, and our mangling, and all Majniemi, will certainly manage to suit the high-born countess," Mother Brita hastened to remark, while the other took breath. "Folks say she is very haughty."

"Well, she has a right to be haughty," returned Susanna, "since she is a born Sparre, and all the Sparres are of the hard-wood sort. I do not forget that our count is of a young family; and even if one's mother happened to be a princess, one can't help it that one's grandmother," here Susanna lowered her voice, "has handled batlet and soap as well as other honest folks. And so our gracious count thought that his children's veins might well contain a tincture of noble blood, especially as the countess was also most unchristianly rich; but 'lo! gold is only dirt,' as is written in the brand-new hymn-book—God bless our gracious king for having given us the book this very year, to the edification and salvation of all pious Christian souls. Yes,—but what was I about to say? Oh, riches,—yes, they flew away, the Reduction men laid hands on the many parishes of the count, both in Livonia and Finland, and the estates of the countess went the same way, and presently," and here the woman again lowered

her voice, "Majniemi will be gone, too. Mind my words. I was here in the time of Master Adam; what is gained by injustice shall be lost in sorrow, and therefore," here she raised her voice again, "I think the countess will have to be content with what the place can offer. For although many hundreds, yes, thousands of dollars are being wasted in frivolous repairing and cleaning, nobody can get me to believe that everything is all right here in the castle . . . . . "

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mother Sanna, to stand there like a night-owl and predict evil to our good and kind master," interrupted Brita again, with a certain tone which she thought it her duty to assume when she defended the house. "If things have been bad before, they are all right now; any child can understand that. 'Do not shame yourself by blaming the one whose bread you eat,' says the proverb. It is rumored that the king is weary of the Reduction, and that the blood-suckers have at last sucked enough. I think they will now leave Majniemi in peace."

"Blood-suckers!" repeated Susanna, in her turn, as authoritatively as though she were about to undertake the defence of the royal crown. "Because our gracious king has rightfully taken back what the high gentlemen had with tricks and violence taken from the crown and the poor people during many, many years . . . . "

"Does anyone know what kind of a man the new head-steward is who is expected here to-day or to-morrow?" interrupted Brita again, perhaps to retreat from a subject which was not without its danger in those days of absolutism when more than once an imprudently spoken word had been answered with rack and wheel.

"The hawk finds room enough in the nest of the heath-cock, and the back of a Jutlander can easily fit a Swedish chair," answered Susanna. "When Nils Janssen was only a simple valet, he was known as a mean and haughty fellow; and I think man seldom becomes better through prosperity. But that fellow is

said to have such wonderful good-fortune in all his undertakings, that everything falls into his hands without effort. The poorer and humbler the count became, the richer and harder grew his head-steward; indeed, folks say that not a few crumbs have fallen from the many parishes and estates which have been taken from Count Bertelsköld. The vile fellow knows this too well; and therefore he has more power in the house than the count himself. He rules and governs. I might tell something of what is said about the countess herself; but the ear was never yet made that has heard an old crow laugh with the magpies."

"Why does not the count, who has the power, discharge such a dangerous servant?" asked one of the younger persons of the company.

"Why?" exclaimed Mother Sanna, with importance. "Mind your sheets, Sara, and don't put your nose into the nobility's key-hole. This much I may tell you: that if the count keeps his head-steward, he has good reasons. I have told you that that fellow succeeds in everything he attempts, while the count meets only with misfortune when the head-steward does not help him. Who secured the rich match for the count? Who lent him money to bribe the Reduction men when Majniemi was last in danger? Who saved him from shipwreck in Åland sea? Who extinguished so wonderfully the great fire here in the castle seven years ago? Yes, you see, all that was done by . . . . Oh, don't stand there gaping at me, Sara, like a ruff with wide-open beak! I wish the old woman would come and teach you to earn your bread, you jade! There are different natures in that family, and I should like to live to see the day when Master Pehr takes Nils Janssen by the collar,—yes, by my soul, I should!"

"Well, well, don't get angry over it, Mother Sanna," said Brita, soothingly, hoping to hear more of those idle stories, so attractive to the lower classes when relating to those in high positions. "Don't you see

that everybody is listening to you, the same as to the minister at church? Did you say that the head-steward was a child of luck? If I remember, he came into the count's service in a strange way. People say that the elder Count Bertelsköld, the father of our count, one winter's day in the time of the late king rode over the ice to Denmark and brought back with him a little boy whom he had stolen from the Jutlanders . . . . "

Susanna, who felt flattered at being considered an oracle in the laundry, was ready to respond to this confidence in a brilliant manner, but at that moment a loud outcry, with shouts and yells, from the upper castle yard, attracted the attention of all, and for a moment broke the thread of gossip. To explain this unusual occurrence, we must go back half an hour or so in our story.

The principle façade of Majniemi castle was ornamented in that heavy but aristocratic style which even to-day renders the mansions of the seventeenth century so imposing. All that wood-carving and stucco-work could achieve was here seen in abundance. Amongst other decorations colossal giants in high relief appeared between the windows, guarding the wall with shield, sword, and helmet, as phantoms of a knightly past. Rain, wind, and time had not, however, been ashamed to break off, here and there, an arm or foot or plume from these gypsum giants, and it was now necessary, by the aid of ladders and scaffolds, to plaster the knights in a manner which they would scarcely have permitted, had they been of flesh and blood.

This was a task which only the German masters were quite familiar with, and the Åbo masons had to be content with the unassuming *rôle* of hodmen. Although they could not reasonably object to this, the association with the Germans was not without some sarcasms on both sides. Among the Finns there was a small broad-shouldered mason, called Yrjö, who had the reputation of being able to mutilate the Swedish language

more ridiculously than any one else, and who, in his songs, was a predecessor of the afterwards still more famous "Eskola kuppen." For although Åbo, which is still more Finnish in disposition and language than many other towns in the country, was still more so at the close of the seventeenth century, yet the Swedish language, through both the university and the nobility, sometimes also through indiscreet clergymen, had already acquired a kind of higher reputation as the language of the court and the educated classes, which the lower classes were not slow to imitate in their way—perhaps not without a consciousness of the satire upon both the Swedes and themselves which lay in their gibberish and which was a sort of revenge for the degradation which overtook the original language of the country.

At the top of a high ladder stood the German master, patching the legs of the giants, while Yrjö, on the ground below him, handed him the plaster, with the remark that it was "Saxon mush with a Finnish ladle." The German retaliated for this remark by every now and then, as if by accident, dropping a little of the plaster upon Yrjö's head. The latter endured this for a while; but when the German, to while away the time, began loudly singing one of his national songs, Yrjö also lifted his voice in another key and sang:

"*Hyökä perju, juupa talar,*
Härät tanssa, miki haakar,
Konkommu, lilla syötövän,
Viska tanssa suullen hyppijän.
Konkommi, lilla tokkaa,
Viska tanssaako hoppaa."

This strange singing contest continued for some time, and heavier and heavier grew the rain of plaster upon Yrjö's face, without, however, moving him to silence. At last the master on the ladder quite lost his temper, and flung the trowel, with sure hand, right at the fore-

head of his impudent helper. This was more than the jolly Åbo mason could bear. Quickly bending his strong shoulders under the ladder, he raised it from the ground, with the fellow still standing on it, and in that position made a dancing excursion around the castle yard with his sprawling antagonist, who had all he could do to hold fast, while the Åbo man continued his

"Konkommi lilla tokkaa,
Viska tanssaako hoppaa!"

The stalwart Yrjö fancied at that moment that he was scarcely less a person than Samson bearing on his shoulders the gates of Gaza. His Åbo comrades, in chorus with the girls and laborers of the castle, attracted thither by the noise, finding the scene so delightful, joined in the familiar melody, and every time they came to the words "tanssaako hoppaa" the leaps of the Finn and the sprawling of the German in the air grew more and more hazardous. But the countrymen of the latter found the scene less amusing, and the Stockholmers joined them. In a twinkling two parties, of almost equal strength, were formed, one determined to rescue the prisoner on the ladder, the other to have the dance continued. The result was, as might have been expected, disputes, abusive words, and finally hand-to-hand fighting.

"Down with the ladder!" at that instant thundered the voice of the steward from across the yard. But the combatants were deaf to everything save their own anger, and continued with all their might, sometimes with curses, sometimes with shouts of laughter, to drum each other's backs to the tune of

"Konkummu, lilla syötövän,
Viska tanssa suullen hyppijän!"

"Down with the ladder, I say!" sounded for the second time the commanding voice of Master Pehr,

and a few hearty cuffs, administered right and left in the crowd, gave emphasis to the command. Yrjö let go of the ladder which he had defended so bravely, the prisoner leaped to the ground, and the combatants separated, muttering sullenly.

The steward looked very angry. "You ought to be ashamed," he said, "to make such a horrid din and steal the wages of your master! You, Yrjö, the next time you dance, it will be to the whip, you churl! And you, Müller, go and plaster your image on the wall, or you will soon be plastered yourself. Go to work, I say; if anyone has been wronged, he may complain to-night, after working-hours. March!"

The noisy crowd became perfectly silent, hesitating, subdued by the steward's firm tones. Then suddenly was heard a short and sharp voice:

"Who has charge here?"

A stranger, in travelling dress, was standing with arms crossed, at the gate.

CHAPTER II.

THE HEAD-STEWARD.

THE new-comer, who had so imperiously interrupted the turmoil in the castle yard, seemed scarcely to be over forty years of age, short and spare of frame, with a bearing which was not very imposing at the first view. But by following the swift glances of the small sharp eyes, and noting the expression of bold and almost audacious energy which played about the thin upper-lip, one easily saw that there was wanting neither power to originate nor skill to execute the plan of an imperious will, whether good or evil.

The man was dressed in a close fitting, somewhat worn, hunting-coat, which, with the short hanger, indicated a huntsman ; but instead of a gun, the butt-ends of a pair of small pistols peeped out from his girdle ; a short gray travelling cloak was thrown over his shoulders, and his sandy hair was covered by a broad-brimmed hat with silver buckle but without a plume.

The stranger's voice had a certain penetrating sharpness which made his first words, although spoken in a low tone, distinctly heard throughout the yard, and caused both the steward and the laborers involuntarily to look around. The stranger was also recognized at the same moment, for he had been in the castle more than once before, although not for several years, and was unexpected now. A low murmur of amazement passed through the crowd.

"It is the head-steward," whispered the men.

Master Pehr colored, bowed politely, and seemed embarrassed.

"Be not offended, sir," said he, "there was a little disagreement between the workmen ; but it is already settled."

It should be observed that the title "sir" was at that time seldom used save toward the nobility and other persons of high rank, and when applied to anyone of a lower position it was an uncommon politeness, indicating either fear or a great conception of the other's importance.

"I ask, who has charge here?" repeated the head-steward, contemptuously. "Who are you, fellow? It seems to me I have seen you before."

"Yes, more than once," answered Pehr, angrily, coloring to the tips of his ears. "When I groomed the count's black mare, you, Nils Janssen, were not too good to dock her tail."

The head-steward measured his former companion with a quick, scarcely perceptible glance ; but this one look sufficiently revealed that Pehr had gained a

dangerous and implacable enemy. Without paying the least attention to the steward's bold answer, Nils Janssen turned to the foreign artisans and asked them to explain the cause of the noise and fighting in the castle yard. They did not wait for the question to be asked twice, and of course gave such a version of the matter that all blame fell upon Yrjö, the laborers of the castle, and even upon the steward.

The head-steward listened to this account, and then turned coolly to Master Pehr and said, in a tone which did not admit of contradiction, as he pointed at the stupefied Yrjö :

"Let that fellow be tied to the whipping-post and given twenty lashes."

The honest steward felt the blood recede from his cheeks as quickly as it had rushed thither, and, pale with consternation, he stammered :

"You cannot be in earnest!"

The head-steward again measured him with a contemptuous look, motioning silently with his hand for the criminal to be seized without delay. A shudder ran through all present. It seemed to them as if the old time of Master Adam was to be revived, with all the lawless tyranny which, without trial or sentence, leaves human beings' welfare as a prey to arbitrariness.

Master Pehr plucked up courage. "Recall that order, sir," said he, "for you cannot defend it either before God or man, nor before the count, our gracious master. The mason Yrjö has acted foolishly ; I will not deny that ; but he is a free artisan, and is not a subject of the castle. And even if he were, he would not be a serf whom you could degrade and flog at pleasure. But if he is to be punished, the law must strike him, sir, and not your mere command, even were you to look seven times as threatening as you do. Let him be summoned before a court ; I shall not object to that ; but so surely as my name is Pehr, you

shall not till then lay a finger upon him; I'll warrant you that."

The manly words of the steward did not fail of making an impression upon all the others, except only the one to whom they were addressed. A sense of justice was awakened in the good-humored Germans:

"*S'ist schon gut, Ihro Gnaden!*" said they. "*Lassen wir den armen Teufel laufen.*"

Nor did the Stockholmers—lately excited by the fight, but honest men, accustomed to see, under the eyes of the king himself, the rule of law and the check of the arbitrariness of the high-born gentlemen—hesitate to take the mason's part; and declared that though the fellow certainly merited a good drubbing amongst his comrades, yet he by no means should be publicly punished like a common offender.

The man who thus saw his authority disputed by a growing opposition, and who evidently designed to degrade the steward by choosing the poor Yrjö as a scape-goat, heard with apparent indifference the remonstrances of the men, as though it were beneath his dignity to answer them. When it seemed to him that he had heard enough, he suddenly checked the stream of German, Finnish, and Swedish eloquence, by inquiring, shortly, whether they would obey or not.

To those who did not know the head-steward well, this question was entirely unexpected, coming, as it did, at the very moment when they supposed they had persuaded him to adopt a milder course. Master Pehr was of this number. He remained silent with the others. But not a hand or foot was moved to obey the harsh order.

Nils Janssen seemed to be prepared for this. Without wasting any further words upon this crowd, which he considered so far below him, he drew out a small whistle, such as hunters use to allure grouse, and sounded a short shrill note, which rang ominously in the ears of the assembled people. The result was sure.

Six huntsmen, all armed like their master, entered through the gate.

"Tie this scoundrel to the nearest tree," said the head-steward, pointing to Yrjö, "and give him fifty lashes."

The order was executed almost as quickly as it was given. The hunters seized the stupefied mason, and before any of the bystanders had thought of lifting an arm to his defense, the man was led away and the execution of the sentence was in full progress.

Was it cowardice? was it surprise? The Finnish mind is slow to action. The men were not prepared for outside interference, and allowed themselves to be taken by surprise in their first consternation. Only the Germans muttered a "*kreutzsapperment!*" and the Stockholmers, with a kind of pity, uttered a saying once very common in Sweden: "When things go all wrong, they go as in Finland!"

The honest Master Pehr required several minutes to clear his thoughts, and meanwhile the head-steward, the hunters, and the delinquent, had disappeared from the yard. But when Pehr had at last recovered his senses, he was seized with the most violent anger, snatched up an iron pole, and cried to the men of the castle to follow him; cost what it might, they must rescue the innocent victim.

Many of the men shared the anger of the steward; but not all shared his courage. Most of them stole away when the matter threatened to become serious, and only six or seven joined the steward with the inadequate weapons nearest at hand. Old Susanna peeped from behind a corner of the castle-wing, where she had established her post of observation, and boldly raised her voice, since the head-steward was no longer to be seen.

"What's the matter now, Master Pehr?" shouted she. "Has the wicked Beelzebub got into you and bewitched your eyes so that you spring after that green

coat like a bull after a red cloth? Were you never so good a watch-dog, Master Pehr, I tell you to beware of the whole pack of wolves, and don't thrust your head into their jaws, for then you will have trouble to know where to place your hat. The raven is a lucky bird for himself, Master Pehr, for he lives a hundred years, but do not touch him, or your fingers will ache. I have for many and many years starched the collars of the late bishop, and this much I can tell you: it is of no use to kick against those who are in power. Do as I and other sensible people do, Master Pehr, and give him the devil when he doesn't expect it; but take care to count the threads of his green coat. Look at me; I can speak when it is needed, and now and then keep my mouth shut when it is best for me; but such hot-headed young fellows as you do not mind what old and sensible people say to you for your own good."

These last words escaped from Mother Susanna angrily, when she saw that the steward did not mind her good advice, but rushed away with his men to rescue the mason. A fight seemed unavoidable, and might scarcely have ended with the victory of the right side; for in his eagerness Master Pehr forgot that both the head-steward and his huntsmen were armed with hangers and pistols. Fortunately, at that moment appeared the vicar's wife, the ready and practical Greta, whose motherly anxiety for her son did not permit her to remain an inactive spectator of an undertaking so dangerous.

"Pehr, my son," said she, firmly grasping his arm, which he vainly strove to free, "be quiet, and obey your mother, as you have always done. To yield to a superior power never degraded a brave man; do not, my dear boy, transgress the law, even if violence does so; adhere to the right; then Almighty God will help us in his own time . . . ."

"But to submit to such an outrage,—no, mother, it can not be, it ought not to be," cried Pehr, beside him-

self. "I have been in Esthonia, in Livonia, in Poland. I have seen not only the lords, but also stewards and ruffians, treat the laborer like a wild beast; but that shall not be done here in Finland, mother, so long as we have a written law and a man's arm to defend it . . . . "

"No, Pehr," continued Greta, "you shall not leave me—I will not let you. You will let them shoot you down like a dog . . . . will you? Go then, go; but I will follow you; before their balls hit you, they shall hit me. Go, you obstinate boy; let them kill you, if you must; but then you will also have killed your mother . . . . "

Pehr burst into tears. "Do you then wish that I, who ought to see that all enjoy their rights here in the castle, in my master's absence, shall suffer . . . . ? Oh! what do you ask of me?"

"I only ask for a little patience," said Greta, vainly trying to maintain her firm and decided tone. "Be prudent, Pehr, be good! You know that the count has an old friendship for us all. He will listen to us. He will make reparation to Yrjö, and, like a just master, punish the violence of his servants . . . . "

"There is nothing else left; it is too late now," answered the steward, with a sigh, as he looked toward the castle gate, through which the head-steward and the huntsmen were returning from the well-performed execution. One of the laborers, who had followed Master Pehr, approached and whispered into his ear:

"Say but one word, and I will crush the scoundrel's skull with this iron pole, so he will never flog an honest man again."

"I forbid you to touch him," whispered Pehr, in his turn averting hostilities. "Let it go for this time, Lampi-Maths! I know you have an old enmity against these petty tyrants since Master Adam's time. But let him alone, my friend; the hand of our Lord will do that better than you and I."

"It is a shame," muttered the Lampi-man—the same whom Master Adam had once thrown into the wheel-room. "It would have done a man good to stop the foul mouth of that villain. But if it is necessary at some other time, then depend upon me."

The head-steward approached, easy and unconcerned in manner, and with a scornful smile of superiority on his thin lips, greeting the pastor's wife as though nothing had happened.

"I am glad to see you so well, Mother Greta," said he. "It will be a pleasure to our gracious lady countess to make your acquaintance, as well as that of the fine calves and summer butter of the parsonage. Little Count Gustaf Adolf is a perfect wolf when he comes to a dish of curds; I pity your milk-shelves, Mother Greta, if he should happen to visit your house often."

"We may then expect her grace and the children soon?" asked Greta, happy to take up other and more peaceful subjects than the recent one—for Master Pehr was still standing, with dark looks, at her side.

"The day after to-morrow, toward evening," answered the head-steward, with the patronizing air of a favorite, and without honoring the steward with a glance. "The count can not tear himself from Stockholm until later in the summer; but his grace wished that the countess and all the children, Count Torsten and Count Gustaf Adolf and Lady Cecilia, should enjoy the charming season here at Majniemi. Her grace's health has not been good this spring, and Count Torsten is very frail for his fourteen years; but in looking at Count Gustaf Adolf and Lady Cecilia, nobody would judge him to be only twelve and her ten years of age, they look so strong and healthy,—just like your fat calves, Mother Greta, to use a comparison more rural than strictly elegant."

"But," continued the head-steward, interrupting himself, and turning shortly and gruffly to Master Pehr, "here I am wasting the time on the count's pedi-

gree, and forgetting how much is still left to be done by the day after to-morrow. What is it I see, my good steward? The workmen idle, as though it were a holiday, now, when every arm should be active? In the yard are mortar, stones, and lumber; my dear friend, I beg you to remember that her grace the countess is accustomed to the utmost elegance in her surroundings. The walls of the castle still wet with plaster? You ought to have put on more men; had you not orders to scatter gold with both hands? And the stairway? Upon my honor, I believe you have put up iron railings instead of the old ones of gilt brass. What does this mean, my friend?"

"You forget, sir," said the steward, angrily, "you forget that the old railing was destroyed by the fire seven years ago. And as I have seldom had, as you say, gold to scatter with both hands, I used railings of good Dannemora iron."

"But, my good steward, how, if I may ask, have you spent the revenues of Majniemi in the last two years? For you yourself know best that the count has not received as much of them as would buy a passable riding-horse."

"How?" repeated Master Pehr, his voice trembling with anger. "I will tell you how, Nils Janssen, you who are so fond of scattering your master's gold—with *one* hand at least. With the count's permission, I have used the revenues of the estate to cultivate again the fields of the castle, to plough the many deserted farms, to drain the ground, to establish a school, to build human habitations for people who before have lived worse than the count's meanest horse; to lighten their burdens, to provide them with implements and cattle, to make human beings out of them, sir! I think the count, who is a good and noble master, when he remembers his Majniemi as it once looked, and sees with his own eyes how it looks now, will forget to ask for the gilt railings."

"You are growing warm, my good steward," said the head-steward, sneeringly; "take a glass of water, and calm yourself; we will speak afterwards of the new improvements. Nothing is perfect in this world, not even your liking for the rabble here in this tract. But you have forgotten one thing: who *you* are, and who *I* am, and who is master of this estate. You have altogether too much to see to, my friend; hereafter I shall try to lighten your burdens."

With these words, the head-steward turned on his heel and went into the castle, affecting a careless superiority in imitation of prominent people. Master Pehr and his mother remained dumb with amazement at the audacity of a servant in playing the part of his master.

CHAPTER III.

THE BERTELSKÖLD FAMILY

TWO days had passed, amidst the great preparations at Majniemi. It must be acknowledged that the head-steward was a man of uncommon energy. He was double, he was triple, he was everywhere. Under his eyes, every hand did the work of four. In an incredibly short time, the castle assumed an entirely new appearance—especially on the outside. Here a crack in the wall was plastered; there a dilapidated spot was covered with fresh paint. All the stairways were polished and decorated; the drawing-rooms were hung with new tapestry; costly carpets were laid in all the rooms; the garden fountain was repaired; the yard was ornamented with rows of young birches—though cut, and doomed in a few days to see their tender verdure wither but it did not matter. The head-

steward was one of those men who regarded outer show as more important than the essence of things, and thought the splendor of a moment not too dearly bought with the price of future decay.

"It looks well," he said, with a satisfied glance at his hasty work. "More gold—more, more, more, in the bottomless whirl. The countess shall be satisfied; my work progresses," added he, silently, with a singular mingling of delight and gloom.

Master Pehr was in an abominable temper. He growled like a chained dog at all who met him. The more the head-steward's brow brightened, the cloudier grew Pehr's.

"Poor Majniemi!" sighed he.

On the afternoon of the third day, all the people were dressed in holiday attire, and the whole yard and a considerable portion of the road were covered with forest leaves and green-house flowers. They waited and waited; but the courier from Åbo, who was to announce the countess' arrival half an hour in advance, was neither heard nor seen. At length he arrived, late in the night, with the message that a contrary wind blew amongst the islands, and that the vessel from Stockholm had probably anchored at Korpo. It was a common thing then, and for many years afterwards, before the miracles of steam-power were yet known.

Many of the waiting people grew discouraged. But the head-steward took a different view of the case. "We have another day," he said, "and it must be used. More gold—still more!"

And he sent to Åbo for costly vases of flowers and rare plants, which were placed along stairways and entrances; triumphal arches, with draperies and festoons, were built along the road; and the six hunters got ready their new livery of blue velvet embroidered with silver. But still another day the expected guests delayed their coming, and then one day more, and again a day, on account of contrary winds. And the head-steward

spent "more and more gold," and every day new birches were felled and fresh flowers procured, and each day the pomp and arrangements for the countess' reception were increased. The head-steward went so far in his zeal as to have all the gables of the peasant-cabins on the estate, which faced the road, painted red. Even the fence-posts were decorated with flags, and along the fences were festoons of mountain-ash blossoms, which diffused a delightful fragrance. And the roads within six miles of the castle were sprinkled with water to lay the dust.

At last, on the afternoon of the seventh day after the head-steward's arrival, a courier, on a foaming horse, reached the castle, and announced that Countess Bertelsköld would arrive before evening, as she had dined with the governor, Baron Lorens Creutz, in Åbo.

Doubt was no longer possible. The enthusiasm to which the head-steward had exhorted the subjects of the castle four times in vain, was now invoked for the fifth time. At seven o'clock in the evening the carriages appeared, four in number, escorted by two outriders at the head and four mounted lackeys in the rear. It was a lovely evening, and a spirited scene. As far as the eye could follow the windings of the road nothing could be seen but verdure, flowers, leaves, triumphal-arches, festival dresses, and whirling hats. An empress could not have been received with greater rural pomp.

As the first carriage, drawn by four white horses, drove through the main gate of the castle, blue-and-yellow flags, with the Bertelsköld coat-of-arms, were at a given signal hoisted on all five towers of the castle, and half a dozen old swivel-guns, placed on the beach, gave a salute. Father Johannes, the pastor of the community, had proposed to receive the countess with a hymn, but the head-steward had opposed it, and the reverend pastor received permission, on condition of being very brief, to greet the mistress of the castle with

a spiritual welcome. Father Johannes performed this duty in his best manner. For a wonder, he used only five or six Latin phrases—the best rhetorical bouquets of the time—but compensated by a goodly number of Bible quotations. He compared the countess to Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who with her servants entered the promised land; and wished that the blessing of Rebecca and Rachel might descend upon the gracious lady and all her house. He compared her children to the lilies of Sharon and the blooms of Kedron, *flores in horto Domini*, and wished that the wisdom of Solomon and the heroism of Gideon might be their worldly inheritance and the crown of glory their eternal reward. Nor did he forget to compare himself to the door-keeper of Jacob's house; expressing the hope that, if agreeable in the sight of God, honey and manna would, under the patronage of their high graces, rain down upon these children of Moses in the desert of their toils, and . . . . and . . .

"But stop now, please, Father Johannes, stop now, or you will make Jews of us all," whispered the head-steward anxiously, pulling the vicar's gown. "Don't you see that her grace is already becoming impatient?"

And really, a light shade of impatience betrayed itself in the charming face of the high-born lady. She, for whom all this pomp was arranged, and who was greeted with such eloquent comparison, seemed a lady of middle height, scarcely over twenty-five years of age, although when at the side of her eldest son she appeared at least thirty-one. Her features were pale, almost expressing suffering, extremely delicate and regular, very pleasing without being strictly beautiful; blue eyes, blond hair, an open forehead, and an unusually pretty mouth with pearl-white teeth. She wore a long travelling cloak of light-gray velvet, with gold clasps, and lined with costly fur—a precaution which might be considered rather untimely for the season; a simple black hat, trimmed with white crape,

increased the unusual paleness of the face, which, however, colored slightly as she interrupted the welcome of the embarrassed vicar by saying briefly: "Many thanks, my good pastor."

Then, still standing on the step of the carriage, she turned to the numerous people crowding about, and said, in a voice too weak to be heard by any except those standing nearest:

"I thank you all, good people, for your good-will and hope that with God's help your reverend pastor's wishes may be fulfilled."

A renewed outburst of joy answered these words, without those standing farther away knowing the reason. But the nearest bystanders noticed that the countess uttered these few words, not indeed without a certain warmth, but yet in a condescending manner, which betrayed that she was not greatly surprised at all these preparations for her, but, on the contrary, was accustomed to such things as proper attention.

While the countess, as soon as could properly be done, retired to her apartments in the castle, where she was welcomed by Mother Greta, the crowd in the yard continued to inspect her suite.

"Who is that tall, thin, dark-complexioned lady upon whose arm her grace is leaning?" inquired Mother Brita, of a fidgetting lackey among the newcomers.

"Her grace's companion, the poor Lady Sinclair," answered the servant.

"Gracious!" said Brita, "I thought she was a baroness at least; she looks as aristocratic as her grace herself. And that other lady in the plaid woollen cloak, who is she?" continued Brita, pointing to a girl of bright and good-humored appearance, but almost too fleshy for her age.

"Miss Linderoth, the young lady's governess," was the short answer.

"Yes, I might have known that," remarked Brita,

with the air of a connoisseur; "there is no more noble blood in that fool than in me. But look! she is helping the little lady out of the carriage. Ah, bless the child! what a little God's-angel she is! And how she resembles her mamma! . . . . And he who jumps out of the carriage at a single leap—he must be the eldest count, little Torsten! How big and splendid he has grown! And how much he resembles his father!"

"Keep your mouth shut, my good friend," said the lackey, "and don't vex their graces' ears with such nonsense. I will tell you that is not Count Torsten, but the younger count, Gustaf Adolf. I fancy Count Torsten hopping from the carriage in that style!"

The two children who sat with the governess in the second carriage really deserved, at least so far as their outer appearance was concerned, all the praise which Mother Brita bestowed upon them. Lady Cecilia was the very image of her mother, but beautified by all the freshness of childhood and a certain expression of kindness which one might in vain seek in the countess, notwithstanding her features, otherwise so agreeable. Gustaf Adolf Bertelsköld was a fresh, stout, fiery, lively, and unruly boy, with his father's black hair—so black that it almost shaded into blue—dark and sparkling eyes, a frame strong and muscular for his age. His first exploits after he had left the carriage were to stroke the necks of the horses, to trip up one of the lackeys headlong in the yard, and then to seize his sister around the waist and leap up the great stairway with her, two or three steps at a time. All this was done in less time than we have used to relate it.

In the third carriage sat Count Torsten, with his tutor—or, perhaps more correctly, his governor. The outward appearance of Torsten Bertelsköld was not so striking, to the curious glances of the spectators, as that of the other children. It was a mingled likeness to both father and mother: light hair and brown eyes, and a certain hauteur united to a sensitive, nervous,

and suffering expression. The youth, although only fourteen years of age, looked much older. He sat wrapped in a thick fur-lined cloak, and as he descended from the carriage, leaned on the shoulder of his governor, and walked across the yard with feeble steps, without greeting any of the bystanders. His companion, Magister Schönberg, of an old but now poor and reduced noble family, seemed to be a man of about forty years, thin, pale, and of a withered appearance.

In the fourth carriage were four chambermaids, with all sorts of articles, both for use and pleasure, amongst which were two lap-dogs, Lady Cecilia's favorite kitten, an ape called Bobbo, two parrots, and a Dutch dwarf called Dick. Behind these were several wagons loaded with the entire outfit for a summer sojourn where nothing which belonged to the aristocratic luxury of that time should be wanting. The spectators did not weary of looking at these magnificent things, of which many were unknown to them even by name. The greatest interest was awakened by the dwarf, the monkey, and the parrots. But these attractions were soon eclipsed by a still more wonderful spectacle.

"What a nice little fellow! What is your name, little man?" exclaimed Mother Brita, insinuatingly bending over the carriage to get a better view of the ape, which sat crouched in a corner with a gold-laced hat on his head. Bobbo evidently considered this an invitation to closer acquaintance, for with a single leap he placed himself astride Mother Brita's neck, and began dressing her hair in such a fashion that the woman fled, crying loudly that she had got the living devil himself on her neck. Mother Susanna, who had been in Åbo and starched the collars of the late bishop, had more than once in her days seen apes in the market, and spoke with contempt of "people who could not distinguish man from beast." And so, when little Dick, the dwarf, was leaving the carriage, Susanna

chose the opportunity to take him in her arms, stroked him like a cat, and said :

"Puss, puss ! what nice clothes he has ! and what a fine coat, little pussy."

But Dick, not finding such caresses at all agreeable, fastened his nails in the cheeks of the astonished woman and cried, in a fury : "You are a cat yourself, and not I—you damned cat !"

If Mother Brita had just shrieked, Mother Susanna shrieked seven times louder. Amidst the general commotion over the mishap of the old woman, horses' hoofs were heard at the gate, and in came six beautiful riding-horses, each with his jockey, and at their head a Moor dressed in a fine silver-embroidered jacket, but black as sin. The terror now became general ; the spectators scattered in all directions. Whether because the Moor felt angry at the horror he inspired, or because it amused him to increase the fear of the ignorant crowd, he made a grim grimace, stretched out his tongue and showed two rows of sharp white teeth. Confusion, cries, and invocations against the evil enemy, were heard everywhere. Mother Susanna recoved sufficiently to reach the sage conclusion that "the devil must certainly have a hand in it, when men became cats, and cats men ; but," added she triumphantly, "he is still afraid of our pastor ; he dared not come here before the pious man's speech was ended."

The fact was that the Moor, who bore the black name of Nero, was the countess' master-of-horse, and had followed her leisurely from Åbo with the riding-horses.

The morning after her arrival at the castle, Countess Bertelsköld sat in her magnificent bed-chamber and looked out upon a charming view over Majniemi sound, while her chambermaid dressed her rich blond hair with the same care as if she were just going to a festival in the Swedish capital. On the table beside the countess stood a silver tray with a set of fine china, in which

chocolate had just been served, and her small feet, thrust negligently into a pair of gold-embroidered slippers, rested on a silken cushion placed before the toilet-table, as if even the fine Persian carpet were not soft and warm enough for the foot which trod it. From the adjoining chamber was heard the harsh crooning of the parrot, quite stifling the sound of the singing-birds in the birches near the shore, even if these young voices of the spring could have sounded through the panes of the carefully closed windows.

It was about seven o'clock, and nature shone in the sunny lustre of a fine June morning. There was a beautiful view over wide leafy shores, between which bays, shining like mirrors, wound like silver ribbons on a light-green velvet carpet. The sea, majestic and mighty, heaving and sinking far away in the background of the picture, had sent hither only its gentlest daughters, the narrow fiords and sounds, which lovingly embraced headlands and islets covered with mountain-ash, birches, and blooming bird-cherry trees.

"Push the curtain aside a little more, Karin," said the countess, captivated by the charming view of the surrounding region. "Bertelsköld was right," added she, thoughtfully; "this country, in spite of its poverty, is very beautiful — almost as beautiful as my West Gothia."

"Your grace should not expose yourself to the breeze," said the chambermaid, with the meddlesome familiarity of a favorite, "Heavens! how well your grace is looking! charming indeed; I wager the count would say the same. Who would have thought that the infamous sea-wind and the cold Finnish air could agree with your grace so well? Permit me . . . . . only that one lock . . . . . so! It is certainly worth while to be so charming, for empty walls, or a stupid parson, or any other clowns in this peasant land. Ah, your grace?"

"What are you sighing for, foolish girl?"

"Ah, your grace, Finland is an abominable country; why should we come here? Wildernesses and pine forests, a goblin behind every stump; and what a language, *kix*, *kax*, *kux!* I think of our travels in France and Italy. There a person might get a taste for country-life. Wherever we went, we bathed in flowers and perfume; sweets upon all lips, at each step a marquis, in each bush a viscount. How charming he was, the handsome Viscount d'Ayrac in Rouen . . . . . "

Doubtless the chambermaid expected to see her daring allusion answered by a slight blush or a smile; but instead, a sudden pallor betrayed itself in the countess' delicate cheeks.

"Where is Sinclair?" asked she, abruptly.

"I see her walking over there in the garden. She has a book in her hand; she neither hears nor sees. But . . . . . she stops; she seems startled. Yes, she calls for help. She beats about her with her red shawl; she runs . . . . . it is the first time any living soul has seen Lady Sinclair run! . . . . . Now she stops again. But what is the matter with her? Look, your grace, look! It is too funny!"

And the over-bold chambermaid burst into a laugh so hearty that the countess was led, against her will, to the window, to see what could cause all this. What she saw was indeed of a character to make gravity itself lose its dignity. Lady Sinclair stood close by the garden-wall, where no further retreat was open, and fought desperately in the air with her red shawl to keep away a dozen turkeys that, with outstretched necks and spread tails, attacked her; and the more she fought with the shawl, the more raging grew her feathered enemies.

"I am sure, it is all a trick of Gustaf Adolf," said the countess, both displeased and laughing. "Run down, Karin, and rescue the lady; and send up my madcap if you see him."

Karin went away, and soon returned with both Gus-

taf Adolph and the rescued lady—the latter as deep-red from anger as her shawl. An inquiry was begun immediately. Gustaf Adolf explained that he had been in the barn with Nero, grooming the horses. Then he had been in the fields with the steward, trying to learn to plough. Afterwards he had happened to open the garden-gate for the turkeys . . . . .

"The count did it intentionally, for he saw me promenading there," said the lady, sharply.

"Yes," said Gustaf Adolf, with a defiant frankness which became him well, "I thought it a pity that the lady should walk there alone, and that I would procure proper company for her."

Even if the mother-heart was inclined to defend the handsome dark-eyed culprit with the glad and open brow, yet the countess well knew how to conceal it.

"It is scarcely proper for a nobleman to learn manners in the stable," she said, severely, "and still less to go behind the plough like a peasant. Besides, you have behaved badly toward Lady Sinclair. I wish you to ask her pardon."

Gustaf Adolf bit his lip. "I beg *your* pardon, mother!" he said.

"But I wish you to beg the lady's pardon."

The boy was silent for a moment. Then he said, stoutly: "No, mamma, it does not become a nobleman to beg the pardon of one whom the turkeys have frightened. Do you think I owe the lady satisfaction? Well, I will not refuse it, if she will fight with me . . ."

A smile, scarcely perceptible, showed that the weak mother, whose strength was more apparent than real, had difficulty in preserving her severity. At that moment the elder brother, Count Torsten, came in and heard the challenge.

"Gustaf is afraid of only one enemy," he said, "and it is loneliness."

"You are right," said the mother, glad to find a way that was less humiliating for her favorite. "Permit

me, my dear lady, to beg your pardon, instead of my obstinate son. But you, Gustaf Adolf, are going immediately up to your chamber, and will have to stay there, in confinement, till night. That will be your punishment this time."

The doomed culprit made a stiff bow, and obeyed. He was scarcely outside the room, when little Cecilia, who had listened at the door, flung her arms about his neck and exclaimed, half crying: "Don't be sad, Gustaf! I will stay all day with you. I will bring you all my dolls, if you will only promise not to hang them with the curtain string, as you did the last time."

"Let me alone," said the boy, sulkily. But he quickly repented, and the tears came to his eyes. "You would have had a pleasanter time outside," he said; "but come. You are very kind, to care for me. I will never harm your dolls again."

The brother and sister went to share the imprisonment. But in the bed-chamber a consultation was continued between the countess, Lady Sinclair, and young Count Torsten.

"Gustaf Adolf is too easily led astray," the mother said, excusingly. "I am sorry he has no fitter company here at Majniemi than servants and peasants."

Lady Sinclair, still excited, spoke a word about the independent airs which some of the subjects of the castle showed. She had just been reading, with amazement, a new novel, by Scudery, when she was unexpectedly attacked by . . . . and she had seen several of the garden laborers at the same time working within a short distance from her, but not one of them had stirred a foot to come to her assistance. And the steward, who crossed the yard, had even dared to laugh . . . .

Torsten took this statement in a way which betrayed the aristocratic principles imbibed from his teacher, perhaps to some extent from his father.

"Majniemi," said he, "has wanted a master alto-

gether too long. The people here have accustomed themselves to live as they like ; they ought to get used to that dependent situation which becomes them. I do not dislike the steward ; he seems to be a good man, but altogether too arbitrary. The head-steward has reported a very blamable piece of obstinacy. Such a thing ought to be prevented from happening again."

The countess, absorbed in thought, gazed out upon the lovely prospect. "Let the steward be told," she said, carelessly, "not to teach Gustaf Adolf to plough. Let him be told that submissiveness, outward and inward, is his duty and that of his people. Come, Torsten, look there ! Do you see that glimmering blue belt over those tree-tops ? It is the sea, Torsten ! Oh, how beautiful is greatness when it knows how to be gentle ! "

Torsten looked toward the sea. He felt the contradiction in his mother's words, and answered by a remark far beyond his years.

"But, mother, is it not the chief duty of greatness to be great ? "

"Just for that reason," said the countess, "it need not belittle anything at its side. See, Torsten, this is the Finland which has been pictured to us as a desert wild. But it seems to me both beautiful and great."

CHAPTER IV.

FESTIVALS AND DANGERS.

THE vigorous, sober, earnest, almost sullen reign of Charles XI had suddenly raised a barrier before the luxury of the Swedish nobility, which, since

the times of Queen Christina, overflowed all limits. There was a speedy end to all the magnificent festivals, lasting for weeks, ring-runnings, tilts, comedies, duels, streams of wine, mountains of roasts, gilded carriages, rustling silks, and clinking of scattered silver, over the whole Swedish kingdom, Finland not excepted. The proud castles of the nobility grew silent, almost deserted; the sounds of festivity had died away; the heavy abundance of the tables had melted; the pomp had faded; the silver had wandered through the Reduction into the king's treasury. And in place of these came the stiff wigs, the long sermons, the sharp inquisitions, the iron-hard ordinance against duels; and also a certain blunt roughness, in which the king personally set an example. But, as though the powers of darkness had become angered over the piety, the seriousness, and the stern manners which became common, the most dangerous and destructive enemy to the peace of the North began at the same time to smuggle its venom into the kernel of society. Luxury disappeared, whiskey came.

In the last years of the mighty tamer of the nobility it was therefore something unusual, even unheard of, to see the nobility which had for the greater part become impoverished, resume some of its former splendor; but this took place only in regions so remote that they thought themselves secure from the vigilant eyes of the Reduction men. If this was the case at Majniemi, we shall soon learn. It is a fact that immediately after the arrival of the count's family, in the summer of 1695, there began a series of festivals so brilliant and so extravagant that they seemed scarcely in accordance with either the customs of the time, the perils of wealth, or the rural tranquillity to which Countess Bertelsköld had retired for her impaired health.

Although Count Bertelsköld belonged to the younger nobility, the creatures of Christina, his countess, born Sparre, was connected with the oldest

families, and shared their sympathies and their discontent with the present government. Unfortunately, this true story has not preserved the names of all the proud and high-born guests of the old nobility of the neighborhood who at that time visited Majniemi to participate in its festivals.

But it may be taken for granted that neither the Horns of Kankas—of whom General Evert Gustafsson had died in 1687, and the Governor-General of Finland, Henrik Horn, baron of Marienborg, had left this world in 1693—nor the proud baroness of Lemsjöholm, Anna Maria Cruus, born Countess Horn, nor the less aristocratic Flemings of Willnäs, who had then returned from the count to the baronial line of that name, were missing. Neither were the governor from Åbo, Baron Lorens Creutz of Cassaritz, lord of Sarfvelax, Tjusterby, and the lately-founded Tykö, together with his high-born baroness, Hedvig Eleonora Stenbock, whose mother was a De la Gardie. A great number of the nobility of Åbo and the vicinity followed these leaders to Majniemi.

The summer was rainy and cold, and little favorable to amusements in the open air. The weather seemed bewitched. Every time the countess had arranged a gay festival in the open air, the sky began to grow cloudy ; showers and wind came ; everything was spoiled, and the guests were compelled to amuse themselves inside the castle walls. At the end of July she resolved at any event to celebrate the hay-harvest with a brilliant entertainment, and called up her head-steward.

"My dear Janssen," she said, "the elements have conspired against me ; but you have always good luck with the weather ; fix a day in the coming week when I may invite our friends to a mowing-festival. Next Monday, for example?"

The head-steward was ready immediately. "Your grace is jesting," he answered. "If I possess any luck

deserving the name, it is the luck of being able to fulfill your grace's commands. Mondays and Fridays are considered unlucky days. Will it please your grace to appoint next Thursday?"

"So late? Then there would be reasons for awaiting the arrival of the count. But never mind, we will say Thursday. Have you money?"

"The small sum the count sent is gone long ago," answered the head-steward, "and I have taken all I could squeeze out of the steward. That fellow has an admirable talent for burying all the revenues of the estate in bottomless bogs. However," and Janssen bowed very humbly, "there is needed only a sign from your grace, and, as before . . . ."

"To borrow from you, you mean?" the countess interrupted, proudly. "Sir, I can dispense with the favors of my servants. When I need your assistance, I will let you know."

"As it pleases your grace," answered the head-steward, in the same tone as before, but with a secret glance of wounded pride, and preparing to leave the room.

"Wait," resumed the countess, "I remember that the count, my husband, will be here in two weeks. You may therefore this time advance the expenses; it will only be a loan for a few days. How much do I owe you?"

"A trifling amount, your grace, which I cannot now remember," answered the servant, in the same tone. "My memory is very weak for anything but your grace's commands."

"And I suppose it is because your memory is so weak that you have every time had me sign a receipt for the amount in advance? Janssen . . . . if you should deceive me?"

"Your grace, this suspicion . . . . ! I will immediately tear these unfortunate receipts in pieces before

your grace's eyes, if they deprive me of what I consider most precious on earth—your grace's confidence!"

"It is unnecessary; remain. Do you think that four hundred dollars in silver will suffice for all purchases at Åbo for Thursday . . . . costumes, music, fire-works, grapes, spices, etc?"

"If your grace will permit me to use prudence and economy, I hope for three hundred dollars . . . . "

"Prudence! Economy!" interrupted the countess, violently. "I ask no beggar service from you, sir. You know my wishes; economize and save on your own account, not on mine. Before evening you must outline a plan for the festival; and as for the expenses—here . . . . "

The countess went quickly to her writing-desk and wrote, in a scarcely legible handwriting, the following receipt, which she handed to the head-steward:

"Janssen is entitled to four hundred dollars in silver. Received. [Signed.] Ebba Christina Bertelsköld, born Sparre."

Thursday came, and for the first time in a long while the clear sky seemed to promise a lovely summer day. At about eight o'clock in the morning, the head-steward presented himself to receive the countess' final orders.

Noiselessly he entered the cabinet, his footsteps lost in the embroidered carpet; his mistress seemed not to notice him. His eyes rested unobserved on her attractive and still youthful figure in light morning dress. The countess sat thoughtful, absorbed in the reading of a letter, just received.

The head-steward waited some time in silence; but at last he lost his patience, for the minutes were precious.

"I came to hear if your grace has any further orders," he said, humbly. "Your grace has done wrong in doubting your good-fortune. The day will be charming, and the festival also."

The countess looked up—somewhat annoyed perhaps, for she answered shortly and angrily :

"There will be no festival. Countermand all orders about it."

"Your grace ! . . . ." stammered the head-steward.

"Need I tell you more than once what you must do? The festival will not take place."

"Pardon me, your grace ; it is impossible. Everything is arranged. His excellency from Åbo, their graces from Willnäs, Lemsjöholm, and Kankas, and other prominent guests, were invited yesterday morning, and are expected here by midday. There is no time to send them messages not to come."

"Do as you like. There will be no festival."

"But it will at least be necessary to state some reasons . . . . "

"Need I give my reasons? Sinclair, be so kind as to come here. Do you think reasons must be given?"

Lady Sinclair came. "I fear that your grace can not avoid some explanation," she answered, in some embarrassment. "These Horns and Flemings demand consideration. Their high birth, their rank . . . . "

"Tell them what you choose. Am I responsible that my husband writes so unreasonably? Hear yourself what he writes : 'Political reasons demand, my dear friend, that you live this summer as *retirée* as possible. No *fêtes*, no *luxe ;* it is extremely *risquable* to display a *splendeur* which might attract certain persons' *jalousie*. My *soupçons* I will *expliqué* to you myself, shortly. Till then, *ma très chère*, I shall feel *obligé* to you if you will pay *attention* to my *desseins*.'"

"If I may venture to express my thoughts," said the lady, somewhat vexed, "the meaning of the count cannot be, *pas du tout*, to put *obstacle* in the way of a *fête* which your grace has already announced. That must always be a *question de demain*."

"His grace," remarked the head-steward, "would certainly feel *chagrin* to hear that persons of *qualité*—

as for instance, Baron Creutz—had been affronted by the countermanding of an invitation."

"But what am I to do?" continued the countess, ill-humoredly. "My husband's wishes are clear, although I cannot divine their cause."

"Your grace might suppose that the letter had arrived to-morrow, and not to-day," replied Sinclair, more boldly.

"The day will be charming, the festival beautiful," joined in the head-steward, in the same tone. "Such a day will not come again. Your grace will be recognized as the leader of the entire Finnish nobility."

The countess wavered. But she was extremely devoted to her husband, and would probably have still resolved to follow his wishes, had not little Cecilia just then entered, beside herself with joy over her new costume which she was to wear at the festival, and which represented a dryad or wood-nymph. Maternal weakness got the upper hand. After some hesitation, the countess resolved that the festival should take place—"but this one only."

Sinclair and the head-steward hastened in different directions, triumphant at the success of their plans. Then the chambermaid announced the steward. The countess was not in the mood to see the blunt young man, who showed her sullen miens oftener than joyful ones; but at last yielded. "What do you want?" she asked, shortly.

Master Pehr was not timid, even when it was necessary to wrestle with a bear; but now he felt his courage forsake him. He had rehearsed such a fine speech on the way; now he had entirely forgotten it, and muttered something indistinctly, which was meant for congratulations on the lovely weather.

"It is good," the countess answered, with impatience; "is there anything else you wish to say to me?"

Master Pehr muttered a few words to the effect

that the grass-crop was very light and the meadows ought to have more time before they were mowed.

The countess lost her patience, which certainly was not unlimited. "It is too bad that you have no hay," she said; "that is your fault. My guests shall harvest the castle-meadow to-day. If the crop is too light, then let the nearest meadows be mowed, and bring their hay to the castle-meadow. I wish it to look abundant. Majniemi is rich; the meadows must not be poor. Good-by to you; do as I have told you."

Before Master Pehr had realized it, he was again outside on the stairway.

"You cursed blockhead!" said he to himself. "Had I not repeated so nicely, over and over again, how I would open the eyes of the countess to the full truth? How the horses graze our richest meadows! How the hunters trample our best grain-fields! How the ears of the corn do not get filled! How the grass dwindles away! How famine grins from all the fields! How hunger knocks at all the doors! How arrogance oppresses us! How greed extorts from us! How lazy insolent servants herd with the peasants as they like! How everything is squandered! How the tenants grumble! How the servants lie! How they steal! How Majniemi is going to ruin! How all my work is wasted! Good God, not my work, but thine! Protect this unhappy castle, that the days may not return of which old people still speak with horror!"

These words burst forth, incoherently, like the noise of a distant cataract, from the broad breast of the steward. But he had not much time to give himself up to these gloomy thoughts. On the stairway he was almost run over by the hurrying servants; in the yard he was besieged from all sides. There had to be oats, hay, and stable-room for a hundred horses, abundant food and drink for the numerous attendants of the guests; flags on the towers; fresh arbors and triumphal arches; all the subjects of the castle must

be at their post in festive dress, well drilled, and above all with happy faces. All stores were to be drained, all cellars to give up their contents. Majniemi should appear rich, aristocratic, princely, royal, while want stole into its cabins and dangers lurked behind the illusion of this glittering pomp.

Master Pehr was a simple and honest farmer. He could not comprehend how such a shimmering veil could be thrown over a ruin so threatening. But one thought was his sole consolation : as soon as the count should come, all would be well ; the count was generous, the count was rich ; he would understand the ills of his people ; perhaps he would throw a barrel of gold into the mouth of misery ; and more than gold : he would throw a sunbeam of humanity into this darkness of tyranny.

But those who were not, like Master Pehr, privy to a part of the mysteries of the castle—for he was far from knowing them all—surely had more joyful thoughts amidst the sunshine of the glorious summer day. The proud castle, with its five turrets, rose above the verdant landscape like a royal palace surrounded by its kingdom. The birds of Majniemi sang in the groves ; the summer had come so late that nature still lived in the after-glow of spring. The silver of the bays wound in slow waves around the shores. In the dark crowns of the pines sighed the memory of past times ; in the light branches of the birches was cradled the hope of coming spring. What human pride had ever succeeded in calling forth on Finland's ground, it attempted here ; but more splendid than its splendor, more glorious than its glory, nature spread its lustrous and radiant peace over the blooming shores of Majniemi.

CHAPTER V.

THE HAYING FESTIVAL.

AT midday the guests began to arrive. There came long rows of the heavy covered carryalls of that time, which required four horses to move them. Beside them elegant horsemen in gay attire galloped lightly and gracefully—young noblemen who let their horses dance in proud curvettings, with arched necks and snorting nostrils, now to the right, now to the left of the vehicles, to win glances of admiration from the beautiful eyes looking out through the carriage windows.

The roads were sprinkled with water and strewn with birch-leaves and flowers. Along the fences were hung, as at the countess' arrival, festoons of mountain-ash and pine. Before turning into the grand entrance to the castle, the carriages drove for a distance of about two hundred feet under an archway of birch and pine, which lent an agreeable coolness to the summer heat. From all five of the castle towers the yellow-blue flags fluttered again in the translucent air, and the large flag on the main tower was decorated with the Bertelsköld coat-of-arms : a horseman fully equipped, on one side of him a lowered drawbridge—alluding to Marienburg (near Würtzburg, where the founder of the family forced his way in advance of his men over the drawbridge of the castle,)—on the other side the escutcheon of Funen, which King Charles X gave to Gustaf Bertelsköld for having been the first to ride across Little Belt.

Dinner was served in the great hall of the castle, at precisely one o'clock, which hour was unusually late for the habits of life in the time of Charles XI, when

people generally rose at four o'clock in the morning, dined at eleven, and went to bed at nine. The hall deserves a special description. It was so spacious that a hundred guests—about the number now gathered together—easily found room around the tables, which were placed in the form of a *B*, of course with sufficient passages between the two half-circles. And yet the height of the hall was proportionately still greater; from the centre of the ceiling hung a twelve-armed chandelier of pure silver, an artistic and costly piece of workmanship, which had been plundered, during the Thirty Years' War, from some princely German castle (who knows?—perhaps from a church), and brought home with other treasures, by the elder Bertelsköld. The ceiling was decorated with a great number of paintings. Here were represented the seven plagues of Egypt, the Israelites in the desert, the fights of Joshua and the Maccabees, and many other edifying scenes from the Old Testament, their selection indicating clearly the predilection of the proprietor of the castle for martial subjects. The walls betrayed the same taste in a still higher degree, for they were covered from floor to ceiling with colossal oil paintings representing scenes from the Thirty Years' War and the campaigns of Charles X. The style betrayed the hand of a Dutch master, and cavalry fights formed the chief subject. Here, amongst other scenes, was Pappenheim's attack upon Stålhandske and the Finns at the battle of Breitenfeld; the crossing of the Lech; Gustaf Adolf's entrance into Munich; his death at Lützen; the battles of Nördlingen and Wittstock; the battle of Warsaw, and other famous events. To these had been added a large picture by another hand, representing the march across Little Belt: in the distance was seen the king victoriously landing at Funen, while nearer, in the foreground, a detachment of cavalry, with wagons and baggage, sank through the breaking ice, while above them

the goddess of fame held a shield on which was written in gold letters :

Gustavus Bertelsköld, comes, obüt 29 Jan. 1658.
*Jacet indomitus victor pro rege sub unda.**

Guided by this picture, it was easy to find in the others, usually close by Gustaf Adolf or Charles X, the gigantic figure of the elder Count Bertelsköld, dealing his blows amidst the hottest strife. The artist had by no means belittled the exploits of the brave count ; but it must be acknowledged that the reality offered rich subjects for his brush. As if to modify the impression of these bloody pictures, a quite different one, of a more peaceful character, was hung at the centre of the great wall opposite the entrance ; it represented Queen Christina bestowing the title of count upon a steel-clad warrior, and below was the date, written likewise in golden letters : *20 Oct., 1650.* Between the six front windows were five large portraits, among which Gustaf Adolf, Christina, and Charles Gustaf were easily recognized. The fourth picture, a knight fully equipped, was the portrait of the same first Count Bertelsköld who was everywhere glorified by the hand of the artist ; and the fifth picture presented the wonderfully beautiful portrait of his early deceased countess, with the date of her death, June 24, 1653. The portraits of the present count and countess were assigned a less conspicuous place in the so-called marble hall.

It would be in vain to attempt a description of the magnificence of the dinner. It must be sufficient to state that the service for all the hundred guests was of silver, with the Bertelsköld escutcheon engraved above a now unknown Polish crest, indicating that this costly service, as well as the chandelier, was a booty from the war, taken from some conquered castle in Poland.

*Gustaf Bertelsköld, count, died the 29th of January, 1658. An unconquered victor for his king, he rests beneath the wave.

Reminiscences of war were revived; but now their splendor alone was seen, the tears were forgotten.

Coffee was not at this time unknown, but yet was not drank at grand parties. In its place, a sweet Spanish wine, in small cut glasses with ivory bases, was served after the numerous Stockholm patties and French preserves, at the end of the meal. The countess, who presided at the side of Baron Creutz, arose immediately afterwards; the guests followed her example, and the dinner was finished at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Now each cavalier offered his arm to a lady, and they went out to promenade in the castle garden. History has not preserved what they said to each other, these high-born guests at Majniemi, during the promenade in the cool leafy avenues. Delicate gallantries in the half-French, half-Swedish language which was then in vogue, and which had not yet become purified by the prohibitions of kings and the zeal of poets for the northern mother-tongue? Very likely; for in the party were ladies and gentlemen of an older school, whose manners had been acquired in the circle of the brilliant central-figure of "the grand century," the one to whom the nations looked up as to a sun or an idol, the model of all perfection, the oracle of all culture, the powerful, insatiable, illustrious demi-god, Louis XIV. But these older men and women were soon to be supplanted by a younger generation, grown up under the stern seriousness of Charles XI, either in Stockholm or at home in their castles, when their resources no longer sufficed for extravagant foreign travels. And this younger generation had gained from the refinement of their time only the phrases; beneath was often hidden the honest bluntness of the country nobleman or the rude club-law ideas of the soldier. But we can fancy that we see them still, as Dahlberg pictures them in his *Suecia hodierna* of those days, in the engravings of 1695—these gentlemen in shoes, silk stock-

ings, and knee-breeches, in their long coats showing the full curves of the back, with the long rows of buttons, the disproportionate hanging cuffs, the fine white lace collars, and the strange abundant wigs surrounding a face of milk and berries ; and these beauteous dames, in their low-necked, short waisted, tight-fitting but very long dresses with elaborate trimmings, and the short mantilla which was again seen in the nineteenth century, with their bare arms, the coquettish sun-feathers, and the unusually high head-dress *à la Maintenon*—no ! not the bigot Maintenon, God forbid ! — but perhaps . . . .

The two main *façades* of the castle faced north and south. On the north was the main gateway, the castle yard, and the great stairway. The south *façade* looked out upon the garden, over whose well-trimmed hedges the inmates had a most beautiful view of the bay. On the east were the extended out-houses, where, at the beginning of this story, we saw the women washing ; while the large park extended west from the castle, and was connected with the garden by a bridge over an artificial lake. To describe the garden of Majniemi would require much detailed knowledge of the horticulture of that time, in which immense amounts were spent, and for which the most skilful gardeners were brought from Holland. The taste of our time would perhaps find very odd what was then considered the height of elegance ; our more natural feelings would perhaps condemn the violence, or rather the craft, with which the charming irregularities of nature were pressed into straight-lined mathematical figures, which make a monotonous, almost painful impression upon the eye. But in horticulture as an art, that period had advanced perhaps farther than the present, sums which would now seem fabulous being sacrificed in this pleasure, which had become a whim in Holland, a fashion in France, a luxury in England, a passion in Germany, and in all these countries was forced to its extremest

capabilities—sometimes into the marvellous ; the pomp-loving Swedish and Finnish nobility appropriating it perhaps more from a love of imitation than from real inclination. For, compared with the more abundant vegetation of southern countries, these northern gardens must have seemed bleak and faded ; the juiceful verdure was lacking, and also the warm perspective of the atmosphere over the glowing colors of the flowers. But in proportion as nature in our country could not compete in riches with the south, were all the resources of art employed to supply the want and conceal the inferiority.

Majniemi garden was probably surpassed by many others of that time in Sweden, if not in Finland. And yet in art, and perhaps also in splendor, it could compete with many a royal country-seat in the nineteenth century. It extended like a velvet carpet under the castle windows, in eight large stiff-looking squares, each surrounded by trimmed hedges of acacias and rose-bushes. Each part was skilfully worked in rococo style, with borders of flowers, costly tulips, narrow winding paths of sand, and a fine foreign grass which could be cultivated in various colors. In the centre of each square was a marble statue with a pedestal : Jupiter, Juno, Mars, Venus, Apollo, Minerva, Mercury, and Ceres, had each a little kingdom of flowers and verdure. In each of the four corners of the large rectangle which the eight squares formed, was a glittering fountain, where a splashing triton spouted a clear stream into the air. But in the centre of the garden was a circular pond, some twenty feet in diameter, in which a dreadful three-headed dragon spurted a broad jet of water from each of its three mouths, the streams crossing and forming a *B*, glittering in the sunshine.

When wearied of the view of flowers and fountains, one had not far to go before finding coolness beneath a spacious six-pointed star of hop-vines, which climbed

the wooden trellis and united at the top, forming a pleasant arch, and under it the wanderer found comfortable benches to rest upon. In the centre of this star-formed and odorous hall of hops stood a marble table and a fine statue of Hebe, on whose head the daylight, softened by the foliage, fell through the airy and leafy arches.

The older members of the party rested here a little, while the younger ones proceeded to the shore, where five or six light boats were ready for an excursion on the sea. The cavaliers rowed, while the ladies fanned away the mosquitoes with their sun-feathers ; and thus they made a trip around the island, where Black Jane's hut still stood, dilapidated and desolate, like an ancient ruin. The memory of the witch, sentenced to death, had become rooted in the popular mind ; the place was regarded with superstitious terror, and it had been impossible to induce any one to occupy the disreputable house. The boating party passed it quickly, with the joking remark that the treasures of Majniemi were buried here. The notes of a flute were wafted softly over the shining surface of the water ; youth and love were rocked lightly in the boats, and the pretty ladies bent over the boat-sides, and when they saw their flushed cheeks in the water mirror, they dipped their white hands into the water and playfully sprinkled the rowers, who threatened to retaliate by landing at the ill-starred holm.

But the trip did not last long, for now the signal was given to begin the hay-gathering in the castle meadow. Master Pehr was grumbling because the dew was beginning to fall upon the spread hay, so precious from the scanty crop ; but his clouded forehead brightened when the little governess Linderoth, accompanied by Cecilia dressed as a shepherdess, tripped across the meadow and hastened to get rakes for the ladies. Master Pehr was conquered ; he brought what they called for — about thirty light, dainty, blue-painted

rakes, made only for hands that were used to treat work as play. The older people took seats on grassy mounds, and on sofas that had been brought there; but all the younger ones hastened to work. There began laughing, romping, and joking, which made the shores of Majniemi resound. Some of the ladies were quite unaccustomed to the work of raking, and acted very ridiculously; but others had been raised in the country, and more than once before had held a rake. But, heavenly powers! what work they made of it! Master Pehr, whose practical mind always thought chiefly of the useful, had only for a moment been beguiled by the charming sight of the pretty rakers on the green meadow. Soon he saw, with the despair of the farmer, how the hay which was raked together and heaped up by some, was again scattered by others who heedlessly jumped into the hay-cocks or pushed each other into them, while some took armfuls of it and threw over the others. Worst of all was the young Gustaf Adolf; he rushed across the meadows, ravaging and devastating like Atilla, the king of the Huns; for even if grass grew in his track, there grew at least no hay for the barn. The other young noblemen pretended to carry the hay to the carts which were to take it to the barn, but dropped half of it on the way. This was an unfortunate moment for the wigs; no hair-dresser in Åbo or Stockholm would have regarded without the deepest affliction these proud aristocratic masterpieces of their Babylonian art of building. Flattened and disordered, filled with hay and dust, the poor wigs were at last hung upon branches of the trees, playthings for the wanton breezes of evening. Things began to look a little wild, and not altogether high-toned in the meadow of Majniemi; the older persons shook their heads, with the long undisturbed wig locks, in displeasure; but what could they do? Manners had grown a trifle freer since their youth, and they were compelled to seek comfort in the delicious cloudberries and cherries

which were served abundantly by lackeys dressed as shepherds and elves.

Meanwhile the sun began to descend behind the oaks and birches of the park; the improvised laborers were growing tired, and the real laborers had to finish the work. Then the sound of trumpets was heard from the park, and two horsemen appeared—one black as coal from head to foot, on a black steed, the other white as snow, on a white horse—with the proclamation that if the noble company would ascend to Flora's palace, Prince Wintersnow and Prince Autumnnight, with their attendants, would venture a tilt in their honor. The company did not wait to hear this twice, but immediately started for the park.

Flora's palace was an elevation in the centre of the park, on whose crest was a summer-house, which afforded a magnificent view of the sea, the park, the garden, and the long rows of greenhouses, whose windows shone like gold in the evening sun. Here the guests were received by Lady Sinclair disguised as Flora, who distributed from a large basket choice bouquets of rare flowers, as a mark of her gratitude for the work done by the guests in her kingdom. At the foot of the hill a sandy plain extended to the lake on the east; and here were arrangements for the tilting—Turks' heads of pasteboard, rings, and fluttering doves tied by cords.

As soon as the guests had taken their seats, Prince Autumnnight, followed by five other horsemen as black as himself, and Prince Wintersnow, followed by five horsemen as white as himself, entered from opposite sides. The two parties saluted the guests; the trumpets sounded, and the tilt began. The aim was now to catch a hanging ring on the point of a long lance, while riding at full speed around the arena, now to knock down a grinning Turk's head, now to pierce a poor frightened dove vainly trying to escape the danger. The black prince and his men showed themselves decidedly superior to the white prince and his men.

In accuracy of eye, dexterity of hand, and skill in governing his horse, Prince Autumnnight was unexcelled; he had taken six rings, as many Turks, and four doves, before Prince Wintersnow had been able to take even one of each. He was saluted by the lively applause of the spectators, and at a given signal Flora threw her flowery wand into the arena, thus ending the contest; Prince Autumnnight was declared victor, and received from little Cecilia, dressed as queen of the fairies, the prize, consisting of a game-bag made of silk and filled with French caramels, the latter being her own invention, of which she was not a little proud.

Mead was now served, a rest of a few minutes was taken, and then commenced the second and more serious part of the games—a reminiscence of the past, well befitting the martial humor of the time, a time which produced the Carolins, who were a few years afterward to fill all Europe with their fame. Yet there was this significant difference between these games and those of former times: that the real knights were now spectators, while the fighting was done by their servants and persons of lower standing.

Gustaf Adolf, who had followed with burning ardor the progress of the tilt, stole to Prince Wintersnow and whispered in his ear:

"Stand your ground, Master Pehr; show your strength, and give that rascally Janssen a tumble. Beware of Nero—he has the nimblest horse; don't let him get at you from the side. He is as strong as a wolf. But don't be afraid, Pehr; if he is a wolf, you are a bear; drive them both into the pond; yes, do that, Pehr; then I shall like you."

Prince Wintersnow did not answer; he only nodded, and buckled on his helmet and leather jacket.

All the combatants now armed themselves like the white prince, with helmets and leather jackets. When this was done, the signal was given to recommence the tournament.

The arena was too small to permit all to engage in the contest at once. They had therefore agreed that the combatants should meet each other in pairs, one white and one black at a time; so they were drawn up beside each other; then one wheeled to the right, the other to the left, to meet again at the opposite side of the ring, their horses thus gaining sufficient headway to encounter each other with speed and force. The antagonists were expected to endeavor to push each other from the saddle with their aspen lances—the wood being purposely frail, in order to break if the thrust should be too violent. But as the charge was made in a half-circle, centripetal force swung the riders aside and rendered them unsteady in the saddle; and no little calculation and adroitness were required to overcome this influence.

The first pair of horsemen failed to avoid this danger, and their encounter brought both of them down upon the sand, to the great delight of the spectators. The sand was soft; both rose unhurt, but covered with dust, and retired angrily from the field, with menacing gestures.

Both leaders took occasion to whisper a word of warning into the ears of the combatants who now ventured forward. The onset was made with greater caution, and the shock was more decisive. The white rider fell, while the black one kept the saddle, and was greeted as victor by the applause of the spectators.

Both parties, and the spectators also, were growing warm with the strife. Threats, encouragements, and challenges were heard; at Flora's castle the gentlemen laid wagers on one or the other party, and the ladies threw flowers and candy down to the combatants.

Thus encouraged, the third pair advanced, prudently yet at high speed; but the white horseman was too impetuous; his lance broke; the black rider turned quickly aside, and by a sudden thrust under the right shoulder, threw his antagonist from the saddle.

Again the white party was conquered; again a loud cry of exultation was heard from the friends of the black party at Flora's castle.

The encounter of the fourth pair was as undecisive as that of the first. After too violent an onset, both fell from their horses, and the white warrior sprained his ankle so badly that he had to be carried from the field.

Only two of the white party were now left, while the blacks were four in number, as two of them had been victorious and had a right to try their luck again. The bets increased proportionately in Flora's castle, four to two being offered on the black against the white. But the courage of the whites was sustained by the fact that their best fighters had not yet tried their fortune. Yet the blacks also had saved their best men for the last.

Prince Wintersnow now sent his only remaining man to the fight, and Gustaf Adolf, who had decidedly taken the side of the whites, could not refrain from calling out:

"Keep your ground, Lampi-Maths, keep your ground like a man, and throw down the black fellow!"

The white combatant seemed inclined to take the young count at his word. In two successive onsets, he unhorsed two of the blacks—those who had before conquered their white opponents; mingled cries of joy and disappointment were heard from the spectators. The chances of the whites had increased; they were now equal to their antagonists, two and two.

Prince Wintersnow thought it advisable to let his only remaining man rest a moment, while he himself spurred his horse against one of the blacks. At the first onset he felt that his opponent was equal to him, if not superior in ability to govern his horse. As they met, the black rider bent down, avoided the prince's well-directed lance, and turning his horse gave him so violent a side-thrust against the helmet that the prince

would inevitably have fallen from his horse had not the buckles broken and the helmet dropped off. The whole company now recognized in Prince Wintersnow Master Pehr, who, red with anger and mortification, picked up his steel-cap to renew the game.

"Black dog!" muttered he to himself, "this time you shall not escape me!" The signal was given; the horsemen rushed together, but again Master Pehr's lance failed, for the black fighter, with only his right foot in the stirrup, had thrown himself hanging alongside his horse's right flank, and in that position aimed another treacherous thrust, which, however, only hit his opponent's leg. Prince Wintersnow did not appreciate that kind of a joke; he swung round, seized with his left hand the bridle of his enemy's horse, and with his right arm gave the hanging man thrust after thrust, while the horses reared, until at last the black combatant was forced to let go his hold, and fell heavily to the ground. Then the steel visor was pulled off, and the coal-black face of the Moor, Nero, grinned with pain under the helmet.

Now Prince Autumnnight was left alone, against two of the whites. But equality was soon restored; for in the very first onset he threw one of the whites to the ground. It was Lampi-Maths, who thus lost his longed-for revenge. He was too eager; he missed his aim, and at the same moment he fell before the powerful thrust of the black prince.

Thus the two leaders were left alone on the field. All eyes rested on them; both of them had given proof of strength and skill. The wagers on the hill were now equal; nobody could foretell the result with any certainty. It was noticed only that the white prince seemed more fatigued, on account of the fierce struggle in which he had just been engaged. Yet his horse was thought to be both stronger and swifter than his black antagonist's.

The combatants rode slowly to their places, and sa-

luted each other in knightly fashion. Their steel visors concealed the hostile glances with which they measured each other, although the whole thing was meant to be a harmless joke.

The trumpet sounded; the horses felt the spurs, and flew like lightning around the half-circle. When they met, both lances were splintered, and both riders reeled from the shock; but only for a moment. Both kept the saddle, and a storm of applause and hurrahs gave evidence of the pleasure and admiration of the spectators at this pretty riding-game.

The horsemen returned to their places, and the trumpet again sounded. The second onset was less fortunate for the black prince. His horse stumbled, and it would have been an easy thing for the white prince to throw him down from the side; but he did not do it. He calmly turned his horse around, amidst the loud applause of the spectators; and they began for the third time.

The black prince seemed not to understand magnanimity. When they met, the lance of his antagonist broke for the second time; while he had intentionally made a lighter thrust, and kept his weapon. Now he did not hesitate to use it; a violent thrust threw the white prince unexpectedly from the saddle, but he did not fall to the ground, he remained for a second hanging in the stirrup, and, still holding the bridle, succeeded in swinging himself up again. Weaponless, he rode furiously against the black prince, whose horse reared, backed, trampled down the fence, and had nearly thrown his rider into the pond. But the black combatant did not lose his self-possession. At the decisive moment, just upon the edge of the pond, he lightly and skilfully raised his lance and aimed a thrust at his adversary's face. The stroke was so violent that blood gushed from nose and mouth, and the white prince tumbled headlong from his horse into the pond.

A cry of terror was heard from the ladies on the

hill. But the danger was not great, for the conquered whites immediately hurried thither and dragged from the water their fainting leader, who was taken to the castle for necessary care. The black party had thus been victorious; their leader, Prince Autumnnight, rode forward to Flora's castle and received the promised prize—a pretty bugle-horn of gilded silver.

Such was this wild sport; although it might easily end badly, yet it was perhaps no rougher than many other warlike exercises in the time of Charles XI, in which more than once blood ran and necks were broken and ribs cracked for sport, in the fierce games of the future Carolins. A few moments later, the party on the hill-top had forgotten the past in new pleasures. The dim twilight of the summer night came on, and in its shades there shone against the lightly-clouded sky a brilliant display of fireworks—suns, stars, and dazzling rockets. There was a gay life at Majniemi then; the servants were well feasted, and the numerous strange lackeys revelled gayly in the smaller houses of the castle, while an hundred horses scattered the oats around the overflowing cribs.

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNINVITED GUEST.

JUST as the fireworks blazed most magnificently in Majniemi park, and the rockets, leaping high above the tree-tops, ploughed their fiery furrows across the pale night sky, two horsemen gallopped along the broad road leading from Åbo. Reaching the enclosure of the castle park, they turned off to the right, on a side-road, and dismounted at a back entrance. Here

one of the horsemen remained in charge of the horses, while the other hastily disappeared amongst the shadows of the park.

After a while he emerged near Flora's castle and stood for some moments leaning against a tree, with folded arms, viewing the fireworks. A dark mantle protected him from the night air, and covered a part of his face. Gay figures, shepherds and fawns from the festival of the day, romped about in the firelight. From the hill sounded glad music ; and as far as the eye could reach, the park was filled with jest and song, gaiety and luxury. Besides the people of the castle, several hundred spectators had collected from the neighborhood, and in order not to let the music be wasted, frolicsome groups of dancers swung here and there on the grass between the trees.

The new-comer seemed scarcely in a mood to share the gaiety of the night, and was upon the point of going further away, when he was unexpectedly accosted by one of the huntsmen of the castle, around whose green jacket hung fragments of bulrushes, showing that in the pleasures of the day he had played the *rôle* of some kind of a sea-god. The jolly huntsman had taken a little too much liquor, and probably mistook the silent man standing by the tree for one of the servants of the noble guests, who had got too small a share of the treat. The hunter therefore considered that the honor of the castle demanded that for the occasion he should do *les honneurs* as host. He accordingly seized the stranger by the shoulder and swung him round, humming an old song :

> "Shame on the brook where the cavalier's beast
> Is unable his thirst to slake !
> Shame on the host who suffers his guest
> Sober to see the day break ! "

"Come, now, no objections, my good Mercurius, or Dromedarius, or whatever d—d *rôle* you have played

to-day!" exclaimed the honorable host representing the castle, vainly attempting to drag the muffled and gloomy figure along with him. "Am I not Neptune, or Triton, or old Nick, until morning? And you see, my dear brother, since I belong to the water, I have worked in my own element. The devil! what a prince we have for a head-steward! They imagined, in there, that the Spanish wine was only for the mouths of the nobility; but as sure as I stand here—excuse me, dear brother, I am not standing, I am sailing, swimming like a fish,—but Nils Janssen let us bring the last cask from this miserable cellar where even the rats hereafter will die from thirst; for you see, my heart's best friend, Nils Janssen is our count, and the old master, away off in Stockholm—may he flourish like a juniper-tree on the great stone-hill, '*darum kein Feindschaft nicht*,' said the Jew to the Jesuit. Who knows what there is left to eat or drink to-morrow? Nils Janssen must care for that; he has gold, like nuts in a hazel-grove; but the count, you see, is as poor as a Bavarian monk in a Swedish sacristy. Depend upon that, little brother; it will soon be all over with the count, capitally, quickly, *herunter putzwech*."

The huntsman tried to lower his voice at these words, as though revealing an important secret, and continued his efforts to drag the supposed comrade away with him. The latter, however, had better control of his feet and head, and while apparently permitting himself to be led away, in reality he directed the course of both, and in such a way that they avoided the crowd.

"Indeed," said the stranger, with a certain agitation of voice; "so it is all over with the count; but how do you know this?"

"How do I know it?" repeated the huntsman, stammeringly, for the night air seemed to confuse his head instead of clearing it. "How? Well, I will tell you, you Jupiter, or Posidonius, or whatever your name

is ; for godlike are we all. How ? You must understand that the count loves honor, the countess pleasure, and the head-steward has the money. If Nils Janssen did not lend his money for the honor and pleasure of the high-born couple, it would be neither honorable nor pleasant to live here at Majniemi."

"You lie, villain ! " exclaimed the stranger ; but in the same moment he checked himself and tried to lower his voice into the tone of simple confidence which seemed most agreeable to the huntsman's humor. "I mean," added he, "you lie boldly ; it is what the head-steward has boasted to you when he has looked too deeply into the wine-cup."

"Into the wine-cup ? Stop a little ; I will tell you something. Nils Janssen has one fault ; he never looks deep into the wine-cup, no, indeed, *rundarum nichts*, says the German. But I know what you don't know, Posidonius ! "

"Well, what do you know, great Neptunus ? " said the stranger.

"I know that Long Valentin has heard from Kerstin, and Kerstin has heard from Karin, that Nils Janssen is sighing with love for a certain high-born lady ; and Karin has told Kerstin, and Kerstin has told Valentin, and Valentin has told me, that a certain high-born lady was not so unwilling to bestow a gracious glance upon a certain head-steward . . . . but, what are you doing, Posido . . . . "

The jolly huntsman was interrupted in a very disagreeable way, in his little narration of the *chronique scandaleuse* of the castle. Before he had finished, the stranger, as though impelled by sudden fury, seized him by both shoulders and hurled him headlong to the ground. They happened to be close by the pond, near Flora's castle ; and the huntsman fell with half of his body in the water, which sufficed better than the Spanish wine to remind him of his human weakness, in spite of the *rôle* of a god which he had assumed.

Swearing, and half sobered, he arose, determined to avenge himself upon the ungrateful Posidonius; but the latter had disappeared, and was nowhere to be found.

We will meanwhile let the huntsman make his comparisons between the health-giving virtues of the wet elements as applied inside or outside, and quickly transport ourselves to another point in the neighborhood of the castle.

It was late in the night—or, rather, early in the morning; most of the guests had left the castle, but some had remained and got quarters in the guest-chambers, which occupied an entire wing, and always stood ready to receive everyone, known or unknown, who appealed to the hospitality of Majniemi. By and by the castle yard, lately so noisy, became silent; more and more silent grew the rooms; one light after another was extinguished behind the window-panes. Only from the park were heard at intervals the sounds of some late night-revellers, and in the out-buildings was heard the clatter of silver and porcelain which diligent maidens, under the supervision of the vicar's wife, washed during the night, in order to clear away some portion of the ruins of the festival before dawn.

But what a night! Gone was every vestige of the shadowy veil over water and foliage; birds warbled upon every branch in Majniemi park, and over the leafy groves in the northeast rose a flushing sun, in all his splendor, from the bosom of his brief repose. And as he mounted higher and higher, first the windows in the topmost towers began to shine like gold, then the lower windows of the towers, then the row of small windows in the attic, then the windows of the third story, then the second, and last the main story, till finally seven or eight hundred panes shone together in flames of gold, and the castle seemed swimming in a flood of radiance and rosy lustre. What made the scene still more grand and beautiful was that

opposite the sun, in the southwest, a black cloud arose and covered a third part of the sky, forming a dark ground on which the proud edifice glittered like a castle of ancient story, magically reared by fairies between the worlds of light and darkness—perpetual glory on its sunny side, perpetual sorrow on its shady side; pearl and crystal, surrounded by veils of mourning and horror; here, tranquillity, peace, bliss,—there, hatred, tempest, and misfortune; here, a dawning morning of enchanting beauty—there, an approaching day which hides its lightning in black clouds of night.

The scene was indeed so transporting that it was easy to understand how one man at least, struck with its charm, forgot the fatigue of night and the sweetness of repose. This was the man who a little while ago had so abruptly put an end to the confidential revelations of the huntsman. Lonely, motionless, and thoughtful, he surveyed the castle, in all its beautiful light of morning against the cloudy sky. Unconsciously a sigh stole from his bosom and he said to himself:

"Glory which fades, power which perishes, grandeur which sinks! A few more unimportant solstices, and this grand century is completed, its work is finished, and its deeds live only in history. He who reared this castle with treasures gained by outrageous wars on foreign soil perhaps believed that he was building a work for centuries, and raising on Finland's soil an eternal monument to the honor of the family and for the admiration of future times. And—who knows?—this sun, which rises so beautifully, is perhaps the last sun of Majniemi; and the coming time sends in advance its storm-clouds to fling their lightnings upon the dreams of pride and the vain grandeur of a presumptuous human achievement!"

With these words he hastily started, and quickly disappeared through a secret stairway leading into the castle.

About the same hour of the morning, Countess

Bertelsköld sat sleepless by the window of her bed-chamber, thoughtfully surveying the charming view which lay before her eyes in the radiance of the rising sun. The festival had been brilliant and successful; all the noble guests had expressed their admiration of Majniemi's splendor, its costly furnishings, its lavish pomp, its elegant taste. The vanity of the countess was satisfied; but another and more pardonable feeling was mingled with the thoughts of the young and pleasure-loving lady. She had been reared in a family which still preserved no inconsiderable remnants of the former wealth of the Swedish nobility, and which, in remote castles, far from the eyes of the morose and threatening king, had found opportunity to revive some of the former splendor of their surroundings. With ill-concealed discontent, the beautiful countess had for some years been obliged to endure the retired and dismal life which prevailed at the court and in the near vicinity of the king. It was perhaps excusable if here, in rural freedom, she hoped to revive the habits of her youth and to surround herself with the princely splendor which belonged to her birth, her rank, and her fortune.

Occasionally a slight fear mingled with these thoughts—a hesitation as to what the count, her husband, would say; and she had reasons for doubting his readiness to share her views in every respect. But the relation between the two had been good, although somewhat cold in the last years. The countess relied upon her personal charms, which her mirror told her were still powerful enough to conquer the indifference of a husband. Inexperienced in the politics of the day, unacquainted with the causes of the count's objections, the countess considered them to originate from ill-temper, caprice, perhaps from jealosy, rather than from more serious causes. She therefore resolved to receive the count, on his arrival, with new festivals, still more tasteful and still more brilliant; convinced

that she would thereby flatter his pride and bribe him through loving attentions to give his approval.

Captivated by these schemes, the countess rang the bell for her chambermaid, to inquire if Lady Sinclair had yet retired to rest. She felt inclined to confide her new ideas to somebody,—and besides, it was no longer night, it was morning, and the countess could not sleep.

The door opened behind her.

"Karin," said the countess, without turning around, and without waiting for the arrival of Lady Sinclair, "was not this festival charming? The banquets, the promenades, the boating, the hay-mowing, the tilts, the tournament, the fireworks, the costumes, the music, the dancing . . . . . tell me, do you think the Finnish nobility ever saw anything like it at home? Ah, I have humiliated them, these lords of Kankas and Willnäs, and the proud baronness of Lemsjöholm. But no, Karin,—it was not for this; it was to set them an example; they will follow it, *mon enfant*, and we will all have pleasure therefrom. What do you think? The next festival, when the count comes, shall be twice as brilliant. To-morrow we will go to Åbo to order the new costumes. We must have a complete pastoral drama,—or do you think it might perhaps be better to give an allegorical or mythical piece? I could play Diana, and wear a crescent of diamonds. Sinclair could very well pass for a Juno—she likes to wear a proud air. Torsten can be Apollo—no, he is too crooked, he will do better as Mercury; Torsten is a diplomat. Gösta shall be Mars, Cecilia can be Eos, the dawn, and I hope that Linderoth can pull together the strings of her bodice and become Minerva. Nero will be Vulcan, and Bobbo Cerberus. Magister Schönberg will write the verses, but not in Latin. We will excuse ourselves from the pastor's orations. Yes, Karin, we will go to Åbo; we will empty the stores· we will plunder all the

gardens and green-houses; it is so splendid to be lavish! Four hundred flags shall wave on both sides of the road. The count shall drive over a pathway of roses, under successive triumphal arches, one at each twenty steps, six miles before he reaches the castle; and when he arrives, the cannon shall thunder, the music sound, and the whole castle be decked with flowers and branches, and I shall receive him in my close-fitting riding-habit of green velvet, and he will come, happy and proud of my love, stretch out his arms, and say . . . . . "

The countess paused. Transported by her projects, she yet doubted for an instant what the count really would say on such an occasion. . . . Then a voice behind her spoke:

"And he will say: Ebba, you have forgotten your husband's wishes; you have rewarded his confidence by preparing his ruin!"

The countess started. In the large mirror before her she saw the first sunbeams which had found their way through the windows, fall upon the figure of her husband, standing behind her and regarding her with an expression of mingled love, anger, and sorrow.

The times were superstitious, and the first thought of the countess was that a spectre was standing behind her. A sudden fright was depicted in her pretty face; her white cheeks grew whiter than snow; her eyes, lately so expressive, starred steadily at the ghostly object in the glass; and her lips, lately so eloquent, now lacked the power to utter a single word. There came a pause, during which the figure seemed vainly to await an answer.

But Count Bernhard Bertelsköld—for it was indeed he,—was, as the reader may perhaps remember, really a mild and gentle character, with no inclination to profit by the sufferings of others. It grieved him that his arrival, lately described with such enthusiasm, should awaken feelings so opposite to those his wife

had imagined. He hastened forward, took the countess in his arms, and pressed a kiss upon her pale forehead.

"Calm yourself, my beloved Ebba," he said, with an indescribable expression of gentleness and dignity in his features, still so noble, which in their youth were a model of manly beauty. "I come to you like a spectre in the silence of night; and God knows that I do not come with glad thoughts. But you are as high-minded as you are proud; and if I disturb your festivals, my Ebba, I know that your soul has room for higher thoughts than those, and that you will be able to bear even the heaviest blows, if only under the weight of our falling greatness we preserve two treasures unharmed: our honor and our love."

The countess looked up, in doubt, fear, and anxiety. The color returned to her cheeks, but her eyes were filled with tears; she returned her husband's kiss with an undefined feeling of dread.

"You hard and cruel friend!" she said, "why do you return to me thus, and what is the meaning of your enigmatical words?"

"Tell me, Ebba, did you receive my letter of the fourteenth of July?"

"I received it," answered the countess, trembling.

"And yet . . . " the count paused. "But," continued he, after a while, "you must know everything. Yes, I have returned to my castle like a criminal—fear not, I have committed no crime—for the rumor of your brilliant festival reached me immediately upon my arrival at Åbo; and I have said that this festival will be our ruin. Therefore I rode here alone, with only a single groom; I had no heart to smile at my fate—for it is also yours. Wrapped in my cloak, and unrecognized, I witnessed in the park your festival, your fireworks. The strains of music and the gaiety of the dance pierced my heart. I was on the point of fleeing from the sight of so much frivolity upon the verge of ruin, when a villain compelled me to listen to his

miserable slander. Fortunately, it was dark. Had it been daylight, my lady, my own servants would have seen me blush with shame."

"But I do not understand . . . . Explain yourself, my count!" interrupted the countess, whose quick blood, like Bertelsköld's, was seldom far from the boiling point.

"Do not excite yourself—I am calm now," this assurance was contradicted by the count's voice, "but out there I was in a mood to stain my sword with the blood of certain villains—for they were mentioned by name. Tell me, who has loaned you the amounts spent for these festivals that have taken place during my absence? The money I have sent you, I am sorry to say, was quite insufficient for such extensive outlays."

The countess colored deeply. "*Monsieur le Comte*," she said, with emphasis, "as my husband, you have a right to put such questions; but as a nobleman, it would have become you better not to do it. Spare me the humiliation of devoting the first hour of our meeting to such explanations. To-morrow you shall see all the papers concerning the matter."

The last fault for which Bernhard Bertelsköld could be blamed was avarice, even in its finer form of economic motives. The countess' words touched a sensitive chord. He walked a few times up and down the room.

"Madam," he said, "I have possessed larger estates than any prince, and I have lost them—perhaps at this hour all. I have owned millions, and I have seen them disappear, thousand after thousand. You ought to know—you, my countess—that all these losses have not cost me a sigh or a sleepless night. If you have been lavish from inclination, I have been so from principle; in this we have no reason to reproach each other. But the gold I have squandered was mine. That which you have strewn upon the roads belonged to a servant—to a wretch who has had the audacity to

offer you loans, to lift himself to the level of his mistress' creditor, perhaps in the belief that thereby he imposed upon her a degrading gratitude. I would never have told you this, my lady ; for if I had injured my wife by the least suspicion of her honor, I should not now stand here. . . . . But since you have told me what a nobleman ought to do, I will tell you what a Countess Bertelsköld ought *not* to do. Do you know what consequences have already come from this careless soliciting of favors from a servant? Well, my countess, there is not one of your lackeys who does not whisper about it, who does not give your honor as a prey to scandal. You have danced to-day; you have given a splendid festival. Blind one! While you were lavishing pleasures and gifts, drunken servants were whispering into the ears of the first who cared to listen, that the head-steward of Countess Bertelsköld dares to lift his eyes even to his mistress' person."

The countess arose hastily and excitedly. She would have answered, but the words died upon her lips. In vain pride rose within her breast ; she felt herself humiliated as a woman, and as a wife, and her feeling broke forth in a flood of silent tears.

Bertelsköld felt his anger melt. "Do not answer, Ebba," he said, "or, rather, answer only with your tears."

But the countess wiped away her tears, raised her bowed head, and said : "It is enough. My head-steward *cannot* insult me. He must be turned away . . . . that is all. And then we will leave this Finland, which only offers us sorrows and humiliations. Is it not so?" she added, impetuously ; "we will return to Sweden, soon, very soon?"

"Finland is my native land ; it has been dear to me from my cradle," said the count. "It has given us what it had to give : a rural retreat, faithfulness, and devotion ; our misfortunes we ourselves brought hither

across the sea. I share your opinion that Nils Janssen must be dismissed, and at any cost."

"But . . . . it cannot be inconvenient to you to pay the paltry thousand dollars or so, which he has to demand?"

"Who knows? He is a dangerous man, crafty, selfish, and revengeful. Janssen is an inheritance from my father; I would have dismissed him long ago, if I had not thought I had something to make amends for. You will remember that at the remarkable expedition across Little Belt, in 1658, my father was the first to ride across the ice to Funen. As a proof that he had been there, he brought back to the king a Danish boy, five years old, whom he had snatched from the crowd of people on the coast of Funen, even from the arms of his mother. This boy is Janssen. I esteem the Danes; they are an honest people. But this twig from Danish soil was too violently and unnaturally transplanted amongst foreigners; he grew up in the midst of war, and was neglected; and thus he degenerated from the level of his nation, and became a villain. Unfortunately, it is a sin which rests upon my family. I have tried to atone for it—in vain! A Nemesis was the result of the violent deed which brought this boy to us. He became a serpent in my bosom. Reared in our house from the days of childhood, Janssen knows more than he ought to. I fear that he might ruin us."

"Again an enigma! A man like him—a low-born fellow—a simple servant—able to ruin Count Bertelsköld!"

"Alas, Ebba, Count Bertelsköld is, or will perhaps soon be, a beggar. You do not know this terrible league which stretches out its claws for the power and possessions of the nobility, which has plundered and impoverished the richest, which has ruined and scorned the most powerful, and which, not yet satiated with prey, is ever opening its jaws to swallow the hereditary

estates of the Swedish nobility. Then know that this Moloch threatens to swallow us also in its burning copper-furnace; and its name, at which Sweden and all her provinces tremble, is—*the Reduction!*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE REDUCTION.

"THE Reduction!" repeated Countess Bertelsköld, with an amazement which even she was unable to understand. She knew too well this name—who did not know it?—but she had only a vague idea of the full significance of this great revolution, in which two tidal waves, one from above, the other from below, broke over the heads of the Swedish nobility and threatened to rebuke its arrogance by a total annihilation of its power.

The count seized his wife's hand, and seated himself by her side. "It is necessary," he said, "that you should become acquainted with our situation and the dangers by which we are surrounded. I am approaching that age in life when shadows foretell the nearness of evening. I may die some day, and you may be left alone with three minor children, without any manly support at your side. But you are a sensible woman, Ebba, although sometimes misled; Providence has endowed you with a strong soul, to which adversity will only give a new elasticity. Have you patience to listen to me now? I fear you are too tired; you need rest. Let us defer our conversation for awhile."

"No," interrupted the countess, with the vehemence of her temper; "I feel no weariness. Tell me everything, and do not spare me. Do you imagine I could

sleep under the burden of a half confidence, with forebodings of unknown dangers threatening our whole future? I beg of you, I demand of you, to tell me the whole truth. For you said truly, I have strength to bear it."

"Well," replied the count, "you know that the Bertelsköld family is of recent origin; our escutcheon dates only to 1636. But the favor of Queen Christina, together with certain family secrets, early raised my father to an equality with the oldest families of the kingdom. Our title of count is from 1650; our first possessions were partly war booty from Germany, partly the princely dower of my mother. These treasures would have been soon exhausted, for the newness of our escutcheon led my father to try to surpass the older families in lavish splendor. But at the same time my father received great feudal estates, partly in Finland, partly in Livonia; and these were considerably increased by King Charles X, during the Polish war, and after the march across Little Belt, where my father lost his life. And thus at the death of that king, in 1660, my possessions consisted of four parishes in Finland, with more than three hundred farms, and my estates in Livonia, numbering more than twelve thousand serfs."

"You were a prince in power."

"I was. But I must tell you something which I have thus far kept a secret. Consider it childish if you will, but my father believed in it, and I cannot deny that accidents have curiously shaken my skepticism in the matter. Upon our family rests the double and conflicting influence of a blessing and a curse. This secret influence is connected with a ring, an amulet, whose history my eldest son will one day find in an envelope amongst my private papers. In brief, this ring was worn for a long time by King Gustaf Adolf, and afterwards came into the possession of my father. So long as he wore it, a very strange and unaccountable

success followed him in all his undertakings; but with it went the temptation of an insatiable pride, and also misfortune for those nearest him. This ring was lost. In a miserable village in Jutland a duel was fought in which my father lost two fingers of his left hand; the fingers were found, but not the ring. Two days later, my father perished. The ring had disappeared, and with it went the good-fortune of our family. The greater portion of my life has been a series of outer adversities, and yet of inner satisfaction. At the court I was surrounded by intrigues; often, upon the brink of downfall, I was supported by the favor of Queen Hedvig Eleonora. I sought glory under the banners of Turenne and Condé; glory I found, but never advancement. I was beaten in almost every battle; and whenever the flag under which I fought was victorious, some wound would be certain to prevent my sharing in the triumph. The queen procured for me diplomatic services at foreign courts. I dare say that I performed them with skill and conscience, but they ended always in failure. I had built upon the favor of a sovereign: he died. I had a minister completely in my hands: he fell. I was upon the point of effecting for Sweden a brilliant alliance; the battle of Fehrbellin frustrated it. And meanwhile my possessions melted like snow houses in the spring sunshine. A part of my estates in Livonia were mortgaged and lost. Another part were swallowed up in the first flurry of the Reduction. I did not regret them, for a gentle and happy love remained. The beautiful Ebba Sparre gave me her hand. Strange fate! While outward worldly successes mocked me, in complete contrast with my father, everything around me seemed to bloom with happiness. This very Majniemi, once so unfortunate in its ruined splendor, saw brighter days under the care of a faithful and humane servant."

"And yet there is something which grieves you?" said the countess, gently. "Have you not the cour-

age to forsake outer distinctions for the quiet joys of the heart?"

"Courage?" repeated the count, gloomily. "You know that I have not flinched. But a man belongs not only to himself; he has higher interests to live and fight for. I am drawn into a mighty conflict, raging in the heart of society. Perhaps I have told you that my father's mother was a peasant girl, from fertile and independent East Bothnia. This great-grandfather had all his life fought for one idea—namely, that any power which placed itself between the king and the people was ruinous and intolerable. Providence and his own ambition so directed affairs that his very descendants, the offspring of his daughter, were thrown amongst the nobility, and were forced by their position to become its natural defenders. Then the old peasant king cursed his own descendants, adopted the son of a friend, and exacted from him and his descendants a solemn promise to fight implacably for the extirpation of the nobility—for its perfect annihilation. This promise has already brought forth its fruits. Fate has so directed that the children of this Larsson, who thus inherited the possessions and principles of my grandmother's father, became wealthy, honest, respected men, and at the same time shrewd political leaders. One of them became the representative of the peasantry of Finland, and the other of the burgher class. These men were amongst the most active enemies of the nobility at the convention of the states in 1680, and did their part in the great work of destruction. Thus there is between them and me an inherited hatred, and they are at this moment working to ruin me completely. But I must say in justice to them—as I am able to say of myself—that personal interests disappear when great questions are at issue. It is not now a matter of myself or them; it is a question whether Sweden and Finland shall longer have any nobility besides the flatterers in the ante-chamber of the king and those who

parade the gifts of his humor. Oh—they have not spared their temptations, even with me. They have thought that since I belonged to a newer family, I would rank myself with these parvenues who built their fortune on the ruins of the old nobility. But they have been mistaken. From principle, I have taken sides with the old nobility ; I have bound myself inseparably to their interests by my marriage with you ; and neither I nor my children will ever consent to an unchecked democracy, an absolute monarchy, and a servile flattering court nobility."

"And it is therefore . . . . "

"It is therefore I should feel miserable to lose all power, all influence, in the great struggle which, according to my view, affects the whole internal welfare of the kingdom. Already the party of the opposition lifts its head mockingly, rejoicing at the sight of our full defeat. But they triumph prematurely, these ignorant peasants, these greedy merchants, these hypocritical priests who from the pulpit publicly declare that the subjects are nothing but thralls of the king. Our time will yet come, when we shall take from them their booty, and send them back to their mole-holes. And then, woe unto this autocracy and mob-government, and these renegades from the nobility—these Gyllenstjernes, these Wachtmeisters, this Klas Fleming, and all their party ; and to all the parasites who, headed by Lindsköld, bathe in the sunshine of their splendor. There shall come to them a day of reckoning, and they shall see that the heart of the old oak is to be found neither in its root, nor in its top, but only in its fresh marrowy kernel ! "

Count Bertelsköld had risen and paced the floor with violent steps which betrayed his excited feelings. Instead of the lofty and vigorous, but too bitter and partial style in which he had pictured the Reduction, we will try in a few short words to give a juster repre-

sentation of this remarkable revolution in the internal condition of Sweden and Finland at that time.

The territory of both countries was then divided, as it is still, into lands of the crown, untaxed lands, and taxed lands. The first, through their proprietors and privileges, represented the king; the second, the nobility; the third, the mass of the people. From remotest times, there had been between them ebb and flow, strife and changes; some lawful, some violent, some slow, some sudden. In mediæval times the so-called free lands of the clergy got the upper hand, through gifts to churches and convents. Gustaf Vasa confiscated all of these—more than twenty thousand homesteads—to the crown, which then became the greatest landowner. Afterwards the untaxed estates of the nobility began to increase, favored by the war and the revolutions, and to comprise most of the country, until the Reduction of Charles XI broke their power. At a later time, it was the taxed lands—or, more correctly, the peasantry, for the nature of some land-titles is now unchangeable—which continually increased at the expense of the crown-lands and the lands of the nobility. Each class has thus had its day and its influence on the balance of the state.

In Sweden and Finland there were, in the year 1665, about sixty-five thousand undivided homesteads of different kinds. Of these, Gustaf Adolf, the Regency, and especially Christina, had partly sold, partly given away, thirty-eight thousand seven hundred and fifty homesteads of the crown, with a yearly income of more than one million dollars, almost all of them going to the nobility; so that the nobility at that time possessed between forty and fifty thousand homesteads, counting their former estates. The Palmsköld records trace the land-titles of the nobility in Christina's time. Here is an example. All East Bothnia was given away, except Kronoby parish. There were the following feudal estates: The Stjernskiölds had Kemi;

Åke Axelson, Natt and Dag, had Ijo and Pudasjärwi; the Gyllenstjernes had Uleå; the Taube family had Carlö; the Soop family had Limingo; the Brahes had Kajana, Paldamo, Sotkamo, Salo, Brahestad, Siikajoki, beside Pielisjärwi, Nurmis, Idensalmi, and Kuopio; Falkenberg and Nils Bjelke shared Pyhäjoki; Shering Rosenhane had Kalajoki; the Horns of Kankas had the greater part of Lochteå; Rosenholm had the remainder, and his widow received Kelwiå besides; the Banérs had Gamla-Carleby; the family of De la Gardie had Pedersöre and Jakobstad; Count Klas Tott had Ny-Carleby, Lappo, Ilmola, and half of Wörå; the other half formed the barony of Paikull; the Oxenstjernes had Storkyro, Lillkyro, Mustasaari, and Vasa; the Bonde family had Malaks and Lajhela; the state-councillor Helmfelt had Lappfjärd. And this was this same East Bothnia which half a century before had fought so bloodily for the liberty of the people in the Club War.

If this condition of things had gone on undisturbed, the free land-owning peasantry of Sweden and Finland would soon have been transformed into tenants, laborers, and serfs of the noblemen. This, indeed, was the aim of the old nobility. The example of Poland, of Denmark, of Livonia, and of Esthonia, where the nobility only was significant, and the peasant-serf was less important than the horse which sweated before his plough—when he did not draw it himself—this example was so attractive! But the old independence of the people, together with class-hatred and sometimes meaner motives, raised from all sides a storm against the nobility. The king had no right to give away the inalienable estates of the nation. The royal treasury was almost bankrupt. The peasants had to bear double the burdens of the nobility in taxes and conscriptions. Was it for this that they had shed their blood for their country's welfare in the war? Should the glory of Sweden result in the thralldom of the

people? The first tempest rumbled in 1650, and broke loose in 1655, when the nobility yielded slightly (in the so-called fourth-part perquisition); and this was afterwards frequently repeated. This storm passed over; but it muttered again in 1672; the danger was again averted, but only to return in 1680 and sweep away two-thirds of the immense possessions of the Swedish nobility.

How this occurred, we will let Count Bertelsköld picture—no doubt in the dark hues of party feeling, but also to a great extent truthfully.

"This king," he said, "tends altogether too much toward absolutism. One God, one king, one church—very well; but nobody is permitted to believe anything except as the church wills, nor to possess anything except as the king wills. Around such princes there is never a lack of men who, with contracted foreheads, speak of the gain to the treasury and the commonwealth, and urge the confiscation of the property of subjects. They have conspired against us: servants and clerks were their counsellors; the worst dog in Sweden was their leader. They feigned to want nothing but to relieve their country's misery. Tattlers bore their sayings to the people; paid slanderers knocked at their doors and smuggled in their libels against the aristocracy. Then the question was brought up, and behind the puppets laughed those who pulled the strings. Amongst the noblemen were renegades who cried out so loudly that they were considered the majority. And then a vote was taken, the strangest ever heard of; for those who had the most mouth and the least conscience, asserted that all shared their ideas, and thus a resolution passed while some of us were away, knocking at the closed door of the king. That day was the twenty-ninth of October, 1680, and the impotence of Sweden dates from then. For within the castle that power was broken which defended civil freedom from the whims of a king, and outside the

castle the nobility of Esthonia and Livonia, who had sacrificed so much for Sweden, were changed into beggars, forced to throw themselves into the arms of the first who promised to restore to them their lost privileges. Commissioners were appointed to inquire into the rights of the crown and of the subjects, and judge both, while the king simply stood back and took what he wanted ; and men were appointed whom no conscience troubled, whom no lawful titles could restrain. And they took everything within their reach, first from the most powerful, next from the rich, and at last also from the poorest. And then a cry of woe arose from those who had run blindly into the noose of party leaders, for now they felt it around their own necks, and it was drawn so tightly that even their cries for help were stifled. And while a few grew rich, and boasted in their stolen attire, all others grew poor ; and all over the kingdom such a wail went up from stripped families, from plundered widows and children of great and worthy men, who had been deprived of the price of their husbands' and fathers' blood, that its like was never heard before, nor ever will be heard again except in some country devastated by an enemy."

The count paused for a moment, and we will use his silence to complete his description from the other side.

Some years ago a violent dispute concerning the position of the aristocracy in Swedish history was carried on between the greatest historians of that time in Sweden, Geijer and Fryxell. It is unsafe to take sides with one or the other exclusively. But that in the main point Geijer had shown a closer historical scrutiny, is proven by Fryxell's own later published works, in which, with commendable impartiality, he places the splendor and the great merits which must undeniably be recognized in the aristocracy, especially of the seventeenth century, in opposition to the dangers which threatened the royal power and the liberty of the

people from the pressure of the nobility in both directions. According to Geijer, the aim of the Swedish aristocracy, at the height of its glory, from the death of Gustaf Adolf to the Reduction of Charles XI, was nothing less than to change Sweden into a second Poland, with an elective, not hereditary, king, bound by a predominant council, and a people that, under the burdens of serfdom, should humbly kiss the soles of the grand lords' feet. It must be admitted that this aim was very nearly reached at the time when the nobility, with its most brilliant martial glory, with its most extensive privileges, possessed two-thirds of the soil of Sweden; but Christina, who added seventeen new counts and forty-six new barons to the six counts and fourteen barons previously existing, thereby formed a gap between the old and the new nobility, which divided the aristocracy into two parties; and the circumstance that the old nobility fell in value, and that the envy of the new nobility was excited to the extreme, cleaved the strong nobility asunder, and made it possible for the commoners to break through the barrier from below. In reality, the flood came from above, although hidden, like a mountain torrent which is seen to swell resistlessly at the foot of the rocks, yet derives its source and its strength from the heights above. The result, however, was a flood which swept away first the counts and the barons, which after that time became mere titles, then the smaller feudal palaces, and at last the humbler dwellings, even the peasant cabins. The Reduction really resembled the breaking of a dam: the opening which at first was considered limited, by and by grew wider, so that many who at first cheered loudly, afterwards found with horror that the waves reached them also. The story of all the iniquities of the Reduction is a long one, some of them crying unto heaven. The political results were also both bad and good; and yet it is an established fact that the great majority, the common welfare, the inter-

ests of the people and the state, still bless the Reduction for its chief work—the regulation of the state machinery, the distribution of land, the securing of civil liberty, the common prosperity, and the spreading of education among the masses where formerly it had been only an idle tale.

"But," observed the countess, "you have not yet told me how it was possible for you, during the fifteen years which have passed since the outbreak of the storm, to preserve our Majniemi while around us all the titles of Christina were reverting to the crown."

The count replied: "A father went one winter night into a forest with his children. They were surrounded by wolves, and soon the father saw that destruction threatened all of them. Then, to save the rest, he threw one of his children to the wolves . . . . "

"A mother never would have been so cruel!" exclaimed the countess, with horror.

"No," the count said, calmly; "she would have thrown herself as a sacrifice, and then all her children would have perished with her. Well, the wolves, occupied with their prey, left the wayfarers awhile in peace; but they soon returned. Then the father threw them his second child, and soon after his third. But each time only a small advantage was gained. At last he had only one child left, his dearest one. Then he said: 'No; this child I will not cast from me. Let us rather both perish . . . . '"

"And then . . . . ?" asked the countess, breathlessly.

"What happened then," said the count, gloomily, "the future will soon show."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNFAITHFUL SERVANT.

AS Count Bertelsköld seemed disinclined to enter into further explanations of the means by which he had succeeded in saving Majniemi, the countess, with native tact, avoided further questions regarding the matter, and only ventured a slight allusion to the festival of the previous day. She could not, she said, see any connection between it and the Reduction troubles.

The count answered her: "I must do Charles XI the justice to state that with him individuals count less than principles. He began the Reduction against the opposition of his aunt's husband and of his own half-brother, and he allowed its torrent to descend, with little distinction, upon friends and enemies. But while he is actuated by a single idea—a mania for economy, —he is influenced by whatever impressions are related to this. The king is now everything; the king is law, the king is conscience, the king is good manners. And, contrarily, the individual is nothing; his deeds are only the deeds of the king, his words only the words of the king, and, if this were possible, his thoughts would be only the thoughts of the king. Hence all life and all customs must now, so far as they appear publicly, conform to the life and customs of the king. And the king is a stern, serious, grim, and parsimonious man. Therefore society around him must take the same gray-granite hue, and there must be no glitter but that of steel. You remember how retired we lived in those last years in Stockholm, how carefully we avoided even the appearance of a luxury that might be

displeasing to the king. By this means I succeeded, although belonging to a party hostile to the Reduction, in softening the king's mind so that he only took the most and not all. My barony is confiscated, but Majniemi remains—on the ground, it is said, that the estate is situated in an 'unprohibited' country, and that my father received it as compensation for a regiment of a thousand men, which he raised at his own expense in 1644, for service under Lenart Torstenson, in the campaign against Denmark. But this ground is too frail to trust, since Åke Tott, who for the same reason had a royal donation of Finnish crown estates, lost them without any one thinking of compensating him for his outlays. Four times already has Majniemi been on the black list of the Reduction, and four times has it been erased. But the farther the Reduction has advanced and the more it has swallowed up, the more insatiably has it looked about for new prey, and the greater has been the danger to the little that is left. Two weeks ago my secret friends in the Reduction commission reported to me that Majniemi for the fifth time was threatened. Gyllenborg is my bitterest enemy; Piper not less; Lovisin vacillates, and much depends upon Hastfer. But at last everything depends upon the king himself; and if they succeed in convincing him that the luxury of the Regency is revived by the Bertelsköld family at Majniemi, then this last remnant of an immense fortune is lost beyond hope of rescue."

"But," said the countess, with some uneasiness, "the king's glances cannot penetrate to this remote corner. Who could have told him . . . . ?"

"Who?" repeated the count, with emphasis. "Absolutism is always suspicious; it has an eye in every bush, an ear in every wall. Where the public is silent and only shows one side, there the simplest things are misrepresented, the most innocent are distorted; in every midge is seen an elephant. The king himself has written in defense of the Reduction; but under

penalty of his strongest displeasure, no one has been suffered to write against it. And yet you ask who could place us in an unfavorable light? Three hundred persons witnessed the festival yesterday; and you believe, you inexperienced one, that the report of it will not reach the ears of those who listen eagerly for every suspicious sound from the four corners of the earth! I will tell you another thing: There must be amongst those surrounding us a traitor, a spy, in the pay of Gyllenborg."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the countess, in dismay.

"I am sure of it. Through my secret friends I learned that Gyllenborg knew of your festivals at the beginning of the summer, and has well known how to report them to the king. As a consequence, the question of Majniemi's reduction came up again. You will now understand what caused my letter. Furthermore, your grand festival was known in Stockholm a week ago, yes, even before it was known in Åbo; and therefore I hastened hither, earlier than I had intended, in order to prevent it, if possible. I arrived twenty-four hours too late."

"It was known in Stockholm a week ago? But that is impossible. At that time I scarcely knew it myself."

"Collect your thoughts; think if you did not, two weeks ago, speak of it to any person about you."

"I do not remember. Perhaps I have joked with Sinclair about it. But wait . . . . I dimly remember that about two weeks ago I spoke to my head-steward regarding some costumes, to be made in Åbo, in case there should be a haying-festival."

"And what did he say?"

"He pictured in such lively colors the diversion and pleasure of such a festival amidst the monotony of country life, that my resolution was taken from that moment. I believe, besides, that I named the probable day, and some other details."

The countess colored with shame at these words, and the count ground his teeth. "Probably also it was he who made plans for the previous festivals this summer?"

"I confess that he was so inventive, so skilful and tasteful as an arranger, that I . . . ."

"Enough, my countess; I know all that I need to. What do you think? When you left Stockholm, this very man promised me sincerely to use—of course with all respect to your orders—the utmost economy in everything pertaining to his duties, to keep a strict eye upon the servants accompanying you; in a word, to avoid everything which could in any way make my castle known for a lavish or luxurious style of living. And when I surprise my people in the silence of a summer night, what do I find? A madly extravagant festival, the rumor of which in the times of Charles XI must go over land and kingdom—several hundred persons revelling in the night—drunken servants, with impertinent words upon their lips—and probably my dependants brought to utter ruin! But my castle glitters more gorgeously than ever with all the luxury which a foreign keel has brought to the simple realms of Finland; silver and gold and marble and costly greenhouse plants—everything which might have befitted a prince and a Bertelsköld thirty years ago, is found here in abundance; while the owner of all this magnificence walks like a disquiet shadow through the night, treading upon the roses strewn about his grounds, feeling that at this moment he perhaps possesses less than nothing—yes, less than nothing, my lady, for most of this splendor is borrowed from her grace's head-steward, from a villain who betrays us all! For now it is quite clear: Janssen is Gyllenborg's spy, and all this is a well-laid plan to destroy us!"

The countess answered only with tears; and this sight had the usual effect of somewhat calming the count's excited frame of mind. "Will you permit me

immediately to call Janssen into the ante-chamber?" he said, in a somewhat milder tone. "But . . . . it is better for you to ring for your chambermaid, and let him come in before he knows of my presence. Dry your tears, Ebba; it is not a matter worthy of wetting eyes so beautiful. Tell me, do you share my opinion that this wretch ought not to stay one moment longer in our house?"

"Yes, yes!" answered the countess, resolutely, and rang the bell. The count stepped behind the ample curtains of his wife's bed, and it was resolved that the countess should receive the treacherous steward first. It was nearly five o'clock in the morning, and the sun had already raised its golden orb above the birches on the shores of Majniemi. The noise of revelry had ceased in the park; the whole castle and the neighborhood slept as soundly as one sleeps after a day of toil or of fatiguing pleasures.

The chambermaid was somewhat slow in making her appearance. At last Karin came, half-dazed, and inquired, staring with dimmed eyes, what her grace wished.

"Tell my head-steward to come here immediately!" said the countess. "Do you understand me?—here, to the ante-chamber."

The girl became awake with surprise. "The head-steward!" she repeated, as if she had not heard aright. "He must be asleep now—and I dare not waken him," she added.

The countess became angry. "Go," she said, "I command you. But do not waken anybody else in the castle; knock at his door yourself, and tell him that I wish to see him regarding a matter which admits of no delay."

Karin was a somewhat pert and spoiled waiting-maid, but she was sincerely attached to her mistress, and considered that she ought to venture a remonstrance to what seemed an unreasonable whim. "Your

grace," she said, "it is as good as the middle of the night, and what would people say if . . . . ."

This was too much for the count to hear. He stepped forward. Karin screamed from fright when she saw a tall man step from behind the curtains. "Is it not enough, you impertinent and silly girl, that you hear orders from your mistress? Must you hear them also from me? Go; but for your life do not dare to mention my presence to anyone."

The girl hastened from the room. "The count!" she said to herself; "I would not like to be in Nils Janssen's place now."

"Now you hear for yourself, my lady," said the count, again aroused, "the results of receiving favors from a servant. Every dollar given by him and received by you has been a grain of sand in the mound above the grave of your good name. Such are the results of indiscretion. I will now hear myself what you have to say to him."

The count paused. A quarter of an hour passed. "He is not very prompt to obey, your tasteful arranger," said the count, impatiently.

A few minutes later, the door of the ante-chamber was heard to open, and the countess went out, after having arranged her dress. The chamber door remained half open, so that the count could distinctly hear every word that was spoken.

The head-steward, like Karin, must have regarded the summons as one of these caprices which are so common with those who have learned only to command, never to obey. He came, unconscious of danger, with the self-reliance of a favorite, quite composed, and a little careless, not even caring to hide his yawns. Rather unceremoniously, he asked what the countess required.

"How much do I owe you, Janssen?" the countess asked, in a voice which was intended to be cold and

haughty, but trembled with anger at the humiliation contained in the short question.

Janssen had rather expected to hear a compliment upon the successful festival, the credit of which he attributed largely to himself; but he immediately recovered, and answered, with a fresh yawn:

"It pleases your grace to jest. I have forgotten all obligations except my own. It is I who am indebted. Your grace's goodness has made me for all time your grateful debtor."

And with these words, he boldly advanced a step nearer. As he did so, the countess involuntarily stepped back. "*Is this enough?*" she exclaimed, unable longer to restrain her anger; and she threw at his feet a costly diamond bracelet, so violently that a pair of the glittering gems flew from their setting and rolled like waterdrops over the Turkish carpet which covered the floor of the ante-chamber.

The head-steward retraced the step he had just taken. He hesitated, but only for a second. The next, he had convinced himself that it was merely an outburst of ill-temper, which was nothing uncommon with this otherwise amiable lady. He picked up the bracelet, laid it upon the table, and bowed, without answering a word.

"What!" exclaimed the countess, still more irritated by this silence, which resembled the superiority of self-control over passion. "Do you not see that the bracelet is worth over six thousand dollars? Is that not sufficient to pay you? Do you want more? Look here! And here! And here—take all my jewels; ask what you will; but do not dare think that you have loaned anything to *me*—you, a simple servant, whom I can have driven outside the gates for his inconceivable impudence."

With these words, the countess with blind impetuousness, emptied a drawer in her bureau where she kept

her rarest jewels; and gold chains, rings, pure pearls, and diamond ear-drops, fell together at Janssen's feet.

The head-steward picked them all up and placed them upon the table, with a bearing which did not ill become him. "Your grace," said he, respectfully, "the least of these valuables is sufficient to repay the amount with which I have had the misfortune to displease your grace. This ring," and he chose the smallest one, "I will, with your grace's consent, receive as compensation, and it shall forever rest upon my heart as a memento of the precious favor it has once pleased your grace to show me."

"What you carry upon your heart," the countess said, "is as immaterial to me as what you carry in your heart. Give me my receipts. If you do not have them with you, go and bring them—go! go! go!" and the countess stamped with her little foot, in its silken slipper, on the noiseless carpet.

The head-steward bowed, produced a little pocket-book which he always carried with him, and handed his mistress a bundle of small slips of paper, fifteen or twenty in number, all of which bore the signature of the countess. "I obey your grace's orders," he said, in the same tone as before. "Will your grace be pleased to see if they are correct?"

The man's whole demeanor was so well studied, so apt, that the countess, against her will, felt almost disarmed. To conceal her discomfiture, she feigned to look through the papers, and resolved meanwhile to resort to an artifice for unmasking the hypocrite and coming to a result, as her vehemence had proved fruitless.

"Do not be offended," she said, after a pause. "These receipts have disturbed me; I thought the amount was larger than it is, and the count does not like to have me borrow. It happens that he is to remain awhile longer in Stockholm. Do you think we

could arrange meanwhile for a harvest-festival, when the rye-fields ripen?"

The head-steward was too sly to fall into the trap. "Your grace's commands are law to me," he said, evasively, while his suspicious glances sought to discover the meaning of this sudden change. But the countess was able to assume such an unconstrained air that his *reconnoisançe* led to no results.

"This country life," she continued, "is killingly monotonous; always the same prospects, the same sights, the same snail's-pace in everything. The count is not fond of change; it is quite natural that *at his age* one should prefer quiet and seriousness. You must help me, Janssen, to invent something new, something really charming and pleasant. If we only were nearer Stockholm! Åbo is a small place; everything to be found there, we have already tried. But, I am sorry to say, I have no one in Stockholm to whom I could give a commission to buy what we need."

The head-steward took a half-step forward. "It might be difficult," said he, cautiously, "but your grace's commands might perhaps make the impossible possible. I have no connections in Stockholm, but if your grace commands, I will try."

"Thanks, Janssen; you alone understand me. In my position, you see, I am so fettered . . . . there are prejudices, there are crotchets; and I have never loved a cloister life. . . . But we were to speak of the festival. Perhaps it is best not to think of it, for the count's sake?"

Janssen took a whole step forward. A new light seemed to dawn upon him. This violence and anger in the beginning was perhaps only an artifice, a preliminary to . . . . His boldest dreams seemed about to be realized; and this unexpected discovery blinded him so completely that all his caution left him. He dared to fall upon his knees.

"No, your grace!" he exclaimed. "So much

kindness shall not be wasted upon an ungrateful object. Let me here at your feet declare to you my unlimited devotion! Command, and your slightest wishes shall be fulfilled! I will live only for you, I will worship only you! Speak of this festival, speak of everything which gives you pleasure; and I will accomplish it all. You perhaps do not know that I am one who succeeds in everything;—but I have full assurance of it, and if I ever doubted I should become reassured here at your feet, your grace! You regard me only as an insignificant servant—and it is true, for I am your slave, beautiful and charming countess! But, by heaven! I have more power than you think. I have friends, I have protectors, who can do anything. One word from you—and you are free from the tyranny that oppresses you, from the unworthy treatment which has been presumed upon toward you. One word from me, and I shall have a name and an escutcheon worthy your birth and rank! Far away in the glorious south, surrounded by splendor, pleasures, and riches, admired by all, you shall hasten from triumph to triumph, and your faithful and adoring slave will only ask in return a glance from your beautiful eyes, an approving word from your enchanting lips, and I will forget everything, to remember only you, yes, you . . . . "

"*And me!*" exclaimed Count Bertelsköld, who at that moment stood behind Janssen, seized him firmly by the shoulders, and threw him backwards so violently that he fell at full length on the soft velvet carpet.

A moment passed in silence, while the countess threw herself into her husband's arms, as though for shelter against an injury so unheard of, and against the violence she had just been doing to her pride and her feelings as a woman.

This time the head-steward did not yawn. He arose, very pale, without speaking a word. His habitual composure had left him, and he needed time to regain it.

The count gave him a crushing look of contempt. Then he said coolly, pointing to some rings, which were still upon the floor: "Pick up these things and put them on the table. You know the countess will not tolerate any neglect on the part of her servants."

The head-steward obeyed mechanically.

"And now," continued the count in the same tone, "I will look at your bills. The amount is six thousand, two hundred dollars in silver. Is that all?"

"It is all," replied Janssen, through his teeth.

"But I want a receipt of a later date, which had some relation to the festival of yesterday. Give it to me."

"I have no such receipt, sir count."

"Indeed? Then give me the ring you intended to wear upon your heart. If you want another, you can get it from the chambermaid. The countess does not allow lackeys to soil her jewels,—and upon your heart gold itself would lose its lustre."

There must have been a boiling in the head-steward's breast, but the habit, ever since his childhood, of being his master's servant was yet so strong that he confusedly thrust his hand into his bosom and drew forth a ring. As he was about to hand it to the count, he felt that it was tied to a silk string, and was not the right one. With a quick movement, he sought to hide his mistake, and took out instead the ring the count had asked for.

Bertelsköld noticed this immediately, and the man's embarrassment appeared strange to him. He continued, however, as though he had seen nothing: "Go and bring a foot-stool for the countess. You seem to forget your duties, in her grace's presence."

The head-steward hesitated, but obeyed. As he placed the foot-stool at the countess' feet, in a position so unlike the one he had lately occupied, his eyes sought to discover if this change in the situation had taken place with or without her approval. The con-

temptuous mien of the proud lady told him the whole truth, and this determined his further course of action.

He rose defiantly, looked the count boldly in the face, and said :

"That is enough, sir count! You have repaid my long service in a manner which releases me from all further obligation to you. From this moment I am no longer your servant, whom you can maltreat and humiliate as you please. I am a free man, and I shall know how to use my liberty. Beware, Count Bertelsköld ; you know too little the man you have dared to insult. You speak of your obligations ; but you have forgotten that I also owe you something. And it shall be paid some day, and with interest."

The count's blood boiled over. "I know," he said, "an infamous creature whom I have fed in my house and overwhelmed with kindness,—whose knaveries I have pardoned, whose embezzlements I have feigned not to notice, although they have cost me immense sums. This villain has rewarded my confidence with the blackest treachery, and in return for his master's favor he has been base enough to insult his master's wife, and mad enough not to understand that the thunderbolt was threatening his miserable head. If you know anything further of this fellow, then speak ; I will for a moment longer condescend to listen to you."

"Yes, sir count, I know something further," replied Janssen. "There was once a fatherless boy of five years, good and innocent, as children usually are when not spoiled. He had a mother, whose only child he was, and who loved him above everything in the world. She was honest amidst her poverty ; she hoped her son would become an honest man, as his father had been. But one day a man came riding across the frozen sea to the island of Funen in Denmark, and as he announced himself a messenger of peace, which all were longing for, an unsuspicious and harmless crowd gathered around him to hear if the unhappy war would

not soon be ended. In this crowd were the boy and his mother. Then the stranger left his fallen horse, tied a pair of skates to his feet, and while no one was expecting the least evil, the robber, more faithless than the winter which built bridges for the enemies of the country, seized the little boy by the collar, threw him into a sleigh, hurried away over the broad shining ice plain, and disappeared. The boy wept, and cried for his mother; she heard his wailing voice, and leaped after the robber on the wide sea; but her foot and her heart were not, like his, of iron,—she slipped, fell, arose, ran again, fell once more, arose, and fell again, until she could rise no more; and she was found lifeless on the ice, with her heart broken in her bosom."

Bertelsköld was gloomily silent, and Janssen continued.

"Little as he was, the boy could never forget the last sounds he heard from his despairing mother on the ice. They sounded in his ears by day and night; and if he had become an honest man, they might have had better results for himself and others. But not one calamity only sprang from this child-robbery, but countless ones. This boy, snatched from his home and his country, grew up amidst the horrors of war, amongst rude soldiers and all kinds of vice; he remained for the rest of his life without a home, without a fatherland. Thus the evil powers had a free chance for his young soul, and he became—what he is. Once, this life grew unbearable to him, and he resolved to flee to the land of his childhood and become a better man; but when he came there, no one recognized him, and he was looked upon as a Swedish spy, and driven away. Then this boy, still young, swore an unyielding hatred against those who had caused his misfortune. . . . . And, Count Bertelsköld, you now know what you may expect. I disdain to lie to you longer. It is I who for many years have plundered your treasures and made them mine. It is I who have under-

mined all your welfare. It is I who have delivered you into the claws of the Reduction ; and it is I who will not cease, proud count, until I have made you a dishonored beggar. Command me again, with that haughty air which becomes you so well, to place the foot-stool under the countess' feet ! Call me again, with that aristocratic tone, a servant and a lackey ! One thing was wanting in my revenge, and you have frustrated it ; but do not triumph too soon ; you have not yet seen the end of that Nemesis which pursues your father's crime, and I am a man who succeeds in everything ! "

With these words, the head-steward bowed ironically, and before the count had thought of hindering him he had disappeared.

Then Bertelsköld sprang up, struck his forehead, and exclaimed, oppressed by a sudden horror : " Ebba, my wife, *we are lost ! That man has the king's ring !*'

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEAR-HUNT.

OUR story now moves forward about seven months —months of anxiety and trial. The nearer the powerful reign of Charles XI approached its end, the darker and denser grew the shadows of evening, and at last they blackened into a night of gloomy misfortune, in which the star of Charles XI set, and from which the star of Charles XII arose.

We are now on Swedish soil. It is a February day in 1696, and unusually mild for the season. Nature seemed to diverge surprisingly from her regular course. If the preceding winter had been cold and severe be-

yond comparison, the winter of 1696 was equally remarkable for its premature spring. As early as the second of February, grass of a finger's length was seen along the waysides in the vicinity of Stockholm, and by the seventeenth the deer-park began to be green. At the same time the ice of Mälaren lake melted, and the sleighing along its coasts was almost gone.

On the road which led from Sörmland to Vestmanland, past Arboga to the favorite resort of Charles XI, the famous Kungsör, two sleighs were seen early in the morning struggling along towards the north, over the last remnants of the winter snow. They were aided a little by a mild night frost, which made the road more slippery and covered its water-pools with ice as thin as paper. In the foremost sleigh, drawn by three horses, were sitting Count Bertelsköld and his elder son Torsten ; in the next one, drawn by two horses, sat the youngest son, Gustaf Adolf, with his favorite hunter, Daniel, a younger brother of Master Pehr and the youngest son of Father Johannes and Mother Greta, of Majniemi. The count's brow was clouded ; sometimes he looked out in gloomy silence at the dark-green pine forest ; sometimes he exchanged a few words with his son ; sometimes he turned around with a gesture of impatience to the sleigh behind.

The cause of all this was that the journey had begun to grow a little wearisome to young Gösta. Now he seized the reins, and tried, by a neck-breaking drive over stumps and ditches, to pass his father. Now he noticed a ptarmigan or a grouse in the bushes, stopped, seized Daniel's long gun, and fired, usually without any other effect than frightening the horses and almost causing them to run away. Now again he jumped out of the sledge and amused himself by holding it back while the horses pulled with all their force ; for the boy had already, although but thirteen years old, begun to show a gigantic strength which had more than once thrown full-grown men to the ground. It was a mere

trifle for him, when the sleigh sank into a ditch, to lift it up again alone.

Meanwhile the sky grew clouded, a strong wind arose, and with it a snow-storm which soon whitened the gray roads. The journey was now quickened ; and perhaps for that reason, the count's mood became somewhat softened, and his silence was oftener broken. From the words he exchanged with Torsten, we may get some information regarding the present condition of the family and the purpose of this journey.

The family had left Finland the preceding August, and spent the autumn and the greater part of the winter in Stockholm. Count Bertelsköld and his sons had recently accompanied the countess and Lady Cecilia to the family estate of the Sparres in East Gothia, where the countess had near relatives and intended to spend the mild season. But the count himself was too proud to enjoy for any considerable time a hospitality which in his present position seemed almost humiliating. After spending a few days with his wife's relatives, he left and went north—not direct to Stockholm, but, as we see from the direction of his present journey, to Kungsör. The reason of this was his desire to obtain a personal interview with the king, who was just then spending a few weeks at his favorite resort ; and the count had the most important reasons for this.

Majniemi, his last beautiful and rich paternal estate, had now, for the fifth time, been threatened by the Reduction, and had at last been swallowed in its insatiable flood. Bertelsköld and his friends had exerted vainly all their remaining influence. In vain had his own valuables and his wife's jewels been sacrificed as bribes to agents of the Reduction, who did not disdain the profits of the business, whether or not they succeeded in their more or less sincere attempts to suspend the act. The commissioners of liquidation had again, for appearance sake, inquired into the count's titles, and had found them defective. Majniemi, like

so many other donations, was declared the inalienable property of the crown, which Queen Christina had no right to give away.

"But," objected Bertelsköld's advocate, "Majniemi is only a compensation for the regiment which Count Gustaf Bertelsköld raised in 1644."

"Perhaps so," answered the Reduction men, "but it is at best only an unfruitful claim."

Unfruitful claims were those upon which the crown did not consider itself obliged to pay any interest, such as overdue wages, taxes collected in advance, goods, necessaries, troops, etc., etc., for which subjects had claims against the crown. But fruitful, or interest-bearing claims, were loans of ready money from individuals to the state. Thus, in the money crisis caused by the war, when most of the debts of the crown were paid with crown estates, and the property thus given away was now reduced, that is, reverted to the crown, the question arose—has the present proprietor received these estates in payment of a fruitful or an unfruitful claim? In the former case, the proprietor was allowed to keep the estate until its income was considered an equivalent for both capital and interest, so that the title of the property remained valid as long as its yearly income equalled the interest of the claim; otherwise it was confiscated whenever the full amount was considered paid. In the latter case, when the owner of the claim was only entitled to a compensation for his capital, it was calculated how many years' income would be equivalent to this amount, and when that period had passed the estate reverted to the crown. But this was not all. If the proprietor had had the benefit of the estate beyond that time, in the supposition that it belonged to him, then not only the estate itself was reclaimed but also the income for those years in which he was considered to have had the benefit of it unlawfully; it was thus not enough that he lost his property, but he unexpectedly found himself in debt to the crown,

and usually to an extent which ruined him—all the more certainly from being unanticipated. This was precisely the case with Majniemi. The Bertelsköld family had now been in possession of it for forty-eight years, and the commissioners calculated that twenty years' income ought to have been sufficient to pay for raising the regiment. Consequently, Bertelsköld was not only required to surrender the estate, but also to compensate the crown for the twenty-eight years' income, which, estimated at ten thousand dollars a year, burdened him with an unexpected debt of two hundred and eighty thousand dollars.

Such decrees were usually imperative and unanswerable from the moment they were taken; for what the iron hand of the king had once seized, it seldom or never released. But since the count had complained of the decision, the king's confirmation was exceptionally necessary before the Reduction sentence could be put in execution; and this confirmation had not yet been given. Upon this the count built his last faint hope that the decree might still be annulled; and this was the reason why he hastened in person to seek his majesty in Kungsör.

It was with no light heart that the proud count subjected himself to this humiliating expedition. His chivalrous soul had more than once, with disgust, condescended to negotiations with the sponges of the Reduction. He was not the man to beg by grace what he considered he had the right to demand of justice. But to him the stake meant more than Majniemi. It meant the only inheritance of his children, it meant his position in society, for without Majniemi nothing was left him save his name and the memory of his riches; and it meant still more than all this—the defence of aristocratic principles, for which he had lived, and which he now, with all the ardor of conviction, tried to instill into the mind of his eldest son.

"It is upon you, Torsten, that I rely," he said.

"Gösta's temperament is different; he will become a good soldier, I am convinced; a thrifty farmer, I am sure; but nothing else. You are young, Torsten, but you show the calculating shrewdness of a mature man. You will gain knowledge and experience; you will enter upon the career of a statesman. Perhaps you will some day reach a position where your words will have a decisive influence in the councils of the nation. Remember, my son, that whatever self-interest may otherwise dictate, you must never bargain with your duty, your principles, your convictions. Act not like some of our party, who tried to avert danger by making concessions upon all sides and by flattering the party in power. Never seek popularity; it is a breeze which one moment raises the light feather toward the sky, only to cast it, the next minute, under everybody's feet. My son, stand firmly by what you consider to be right, true, and good; stand firmly, whether favor seeks to allure you, or calumny to condemn you. Never bow to the grace of the king; your escutcheon is too noble to serve as a stirrup for a royal slipper. Never bow to the favor of the crowd; when the wavering opinions of the day shriek themselves hoarse and cry: 'The truth is here! the truth is there!'—then lay your hand upon your heart and answer gently: 'No, it is here!' Remember that if I should leave you no other heritage in the world, I will leave you the heritage of an idea, and this idea is the maintenance of an intermediate power between absolutism and democracy, between the unlimited power of the king, which denies all the rights of others, and the unchecked power of the mob, which dissolves everything into parties. Another period may perhaps find another reconciliation between these eternally antagonistic forces. But in my time, and in your time, Torsten, this reconciliation can be found only through an independent nobility. Promise me that you will always contend for the mediating position of the nobility."

Torsten, who was of a colder and more resolute temperament than his ardent and enthusiastic father, looked steadily into his eyes, and said: "It is not enough. My father places the nobility midway between two powers which may both desire its ruin. It is not enough. The nobility must be everything; and I promise you, father, that it shall be."

The count started at the resoluteness with which the boy of fifteen years uttered these words. "Youth," said he, "always believes in its power to renew the world; and it is true that the strength of youth rests upon this belief. But, Torsten, heed the results of experience. I have lived in France, and I have seen its once powerful nobility descend into a crowd of flattering courtiers, competing for one sunny glance from the gracious demi-god Louis XIV or a smile from the lips of the saint Maintenon. I have lived in Venice and Switzerland, which call themselves republics and in principle recognize the people as the ruler, and I have seen one party after the other tyrannize the people, their master. I have also lived in Poland . . . . "

The count paused. Torsten understood him, and said: "Yes, in Poland the nobility is everything!"

"Do not go too far, my son," said Bertelsköld, lifting his shoulders; "*noblesse oblige.* No France; no Poland; no Venice; but England after 1688: aristocracy and liberty. The king reigns, but does not rule; the nobility rules, but does not reign; the people obeys, but does not accept thralldom. Destroy neither the top nor the root, but let the strength of the tree be in its trunk."

On Torsten's lips hovered the same words of the future, "Too little," which were destined to have their time again a quarter of a century later; but an unexpected event interrupted the conversation between father and son.

The snow-storm had increased in violence, and the road was covered with drifts which rendered it very

difficult for the horses to proceed. In consequence of this, the driver had turned off into a cross-road through the forest, where the wind was lighter, and better sleighing was to be expected. But soon they found a fir-tree fallen across the narrow road, and the travellers were obliged to halt. While young Gösta and the men were busy moving the tree out of the way, the barking of dogs was suddenly heard from the forest, and soon after a large bear walked clumsily and gravely forward, his shaggy brown pelt quite covered with snow. Whenever the dogs, nimbler than he, were on the point of attacking him, he turned round growling, and showed his two rows of formidable teeth, which had the effect of keeping the dogs at a respectful distance. But the sight of the horses, the sleighs, and the travellers, seemed not to please bruin. When about fifty paces from them, he turned abruptly and shambled off into the forest, without paying much attention to his barking pursuers.

But bruin's excursion into the road lasted long enough to stir the blood of young Gösta most violently. Without hearing or seeing anything but the bear, he seized Daniel's loaded gun, and sprang through the snow-drifts into the forest after bruin. In vain his father warned and threatened. Gösta disappeared among the trees, and there was nothing to do but to send Daniel and the driver in the wild fellow's track.

Minute after minute passed in anxious waiting, but neither Gösta nor the men appeared. The horses lifted their ears and seemed to share the anxiety of the travellers ; they remained, however, immovable, while the snow fell so fast that the air resembled a spread white sheet. The barking of the dogs receded, came nearer, moved in a half circle, and receded again. Suddenly it changed into a continuous yell, and directly after a shot was heard, and then another and another. Silence followed, and then a fourth shot sounded. The

count was too old a hunter not to recognize the last shot immediately.

"The fourth shot was Gösta's," he exclaimed.

The four successive reports indicated that something was going on in the forest, but the trees and the falling snow hid the view from the travellers in the road. Therefore we will return to the moment when Gösta Bertelsköld, with more zeal than prudence, ventured alone after the bear between the thick-branching pines and the deep snow-drifts.

Gösta often sank in the snow beyond his knees, stumbled over the stumps, and tore his clothes on the outstretching branches. But if his way was difficult, bruin seemed no less annoyed by the deep snow of a season which he was accustomed to sleep away in his soft winter quarters. Gösta could not quite understand why the bear had left his secure fortress and undertaken such an adventurous expedition; for he had heard that the king of the forest usually defends himself there to the utmost, paying little attention to the irritating but harmless barking of four-footed enemies. If Gösta had happened to think of the unusual spring-like mildness of the season, he would perhaps have guessed that bruin was a little wrong in his reckoning. When he was awakened from his sleep by the barking of the dogs, and with his broad muzzle snuffed the spring air, he probably thought that he had had a sufficiently long nap, and that it was April instead of February. Then he felt a desire to see how the world looked after his long after-dinner nap; and he first realized his mistake when he had to contend with the fresh snow-drifts.

Bruin soon got enough of the promenade, and seemed, like a prudent general, inclined to retire again to his fortress. But to his great displeasure, he noticed that his retreat was barred by some hunters who had surrounded his winter-quarters, and vainly sought him there. Growling, he started on a new cruise into the

forest, but with no better result; Gösta had observed that a well-organized line of hunters had surrounded the powerful forest king, and every minute the ring grew narrower. It seemed unaccountable to Gösta that the hunters did not shoot, although the bear must more than once have been within range of their guns. It might almost be believed that they spared him for some more worthy bullet.

And so indeed it was. Scarcely had bruin, wearied by his long expedition, a second time approached his winter-quarters before a shot sounded from behind a branchy pine. The bullet was well aimed, but the distance was too great; it must have been a young and impulsive hand which fired it. One moment the bear halted, shook himself as though to shake off a gadfly, and continued his course. Then a second shot was fired, at a distance of about sixty paces; but this also succeeded only in slightly scratching the brown snow-covered pelt above the right shoulder.

This seeming raillery began at last to try the patience of bruin, all the more as the dogs took courage from the shots and the nearness of the hunters, and attacked him, howling, from all sides. From a lazy calmness his mood now changed to angry vexation. A fine brown dog of English breed was the first to experience his bad temper. More quickly than anyone expected, he turned around, and with a single blow of his broad paw stretched the impudent tyke dead upon the ground.

Now the third shot was fired, and hit the bear in the middle of the breast. That was too much to be borne with meekness. With a terrible growl, bruin rose upon his hind-legs, the blood trickling down his hairy breast, and with eyes blazing with fury he looked about him for his hidden enemies.

The ground was very rough and uneven; fallen trees, dense thickets, and large bowlders, lay in the path of the angry bear. It would probably have been

easy for the hunter, from his hiding-place, to give the bear one or two shots more; but he seemed to scorn a contest so unchivalrous. Gösta, who, breathless, had crept quite close, saw with astonishment a very young man, almost a boy like himself, throw the empty gun aside, seize a short hunting-spear, and spring forward to a single combat with the powerful beast. This boldness came near costing the young hunter dearly. The bear seized the spear with his forepaws, and broke it into pieces as easily as though it had been a toy. The hunter stepped back, to draw his hanger; but before it was half unsheathed, he was knocked down by the terrible broad paw, and fell into the snow.

A cry of horror escaped from the other hunters, standing farther away. Shoot they could not, for fear of hurting their comrade. Two of them sprang forward with their spears; but it was plain that they would be too late, for in another second the bear would have crushed the tender youth in his paws as easily as an eagle fastens its talons in a linnet.

The whole aspect of Sweden, Finland, and Russia, would probably now have been different, if this second had passed without succor.

But scarcely ten paces to the right, lay Gösta Bertelsköld, behind a large fallen tree trunk; the muzzle of his gun, supported on a branch, had already for some seconds followed the head of the bear, and yet he dared not pull the trigger. He realized that life and death depended upon a single wink. At the instant when the young hunter fell, and the bear for the second time lifted his paw to crush the fallen youth, at that instant Gösta fired.

With a wild moaning cry, the bear took three steps backward, raised his forepaw to his head, balanced himself an instant upon his hind legs, and fell, heavy, stiff, and with a death-rattle. The blood gushed from his nostrils, and colored the snow where he lay. The

strong king of the forest stretched out his gigantic limbs, then moved no more ; he was dead.

The hunters hurried forward and carefully lifted the fallen youth, who, stunned by the terrible blow, needed a few minutes to recover breath. Scarcely was he again upon his feet, before, with all the ardor of youth, he threw himself upon his fallen enemy, to discover his death-wound. It was found that a very small bullet, hardly the size of a pea, had forced its way through the right ear and probably lodged in the brain, causing almost instantaneous death. A larger bullet had lodged in the breast, and was flattened against the inner side of the shoulder-blade. The bear was one of the largest that had ever been seen, and even in death was an object of admiration to the hunters and of terror to the dogs.

"That was to me a Muscovite!" exclaimed the youth, at once both glad and disappointed, for it vexed his ambition that another had reaped the triumph of his daring exploit. "I call you to witness, good sirs, that it was my bullet which tore that broad mark in the rascal's thick pelt. But another time, Fleming, you must give me a better spear, made of beech or oak, not, like that fescue, of birch. It was a pretty solid cuff he gave me ; it came over me like a mountain ; but I slipped at the same time, and so I fell. Thanks, Rosen, for the last shot. There was never a prettier piece of lead ; I heard it whiz like a devil's-imp, twelve inches above my head, and it did its work at once, else I had never cocked a gun again. Here is my hanger ; I have nothing else to give you. But don't mention to my father that I fell."

"The bear has the strength of twelve men," Rosen answered, consolingly. "It is no disgrace to fall one against twelve."

"Do you think so?" said the youth, meditatively. "Good! then I will teach myself to fall if necessary, but retreat—never! And yet, it must be splendid to

be victorious, one against twelve! Or only one against ten—I am not proud. But how is this? . . . . That bullet did not come from your gun, Rosen; it is much too small."

"No," said Rosen, somewhat embarrassed, "it was not I who fired the last shot. Some of your highness' hunters were more fortunate than we, who could not shoot while your highness was in range."

"Tell me," said the young hero, "did you ever see a beast of that size fall for such a small bullet? One might believe him shot with a pea. It is only Northlanders and Finns who use such small calibres to save powder and lead. Holloh! boys! which of you shoots bears with sparrow shot? Show me your guns! Four ducats' reward for the last shot."

Gösta, beside himself with embarrassment and joy, dared not move hand nor foot, although the invitation was very evidently addressed to him. He saw the hunters gather around the youth who had been called "your highness," and whom he fancied he had seen before in Stockholm. He guessed immediately that it was the crown-prince, Charles; but Gösta had always seen him wearing a disproportionately large wig, of which the long locks fell down even to the shoulders, on both sides of the delicate and almost effeminate face. The young huntsman who now stood before him wore short brown hair under a beaver-skin cap, a blue tight-fitting frock of coarse cloth, with a leather belt around his waist, and on his feet boots which only reached half-way up the leg, so as not to impede the walk. His whole figure was far from heroic. But looking at the slender form, the mild blue eyes, the milk-white cheeks now purple with the cold, and the rather spindling limbs, one might have taken the young huntsman for a girl in disguise, if the voice, which was changing its tone, had not had something harsh in it, and his whole bearing something which indicated habits of roving in forest and field.

All the hunters declared, with truth, that none of them had fired the shot, although all insisted that they had intended doing so, if they had not been prevented. While they were disputing about it, a troop of six or seven horsemen approached the edge of the wood, as near as the rugged ground and the snow-drifts would permit, and one of them dismounted and strode forward to the battle-ground, with an inquiry from the king as to what was the matter in the forest. A loud hurrah was the answer; the heavy body of bruin was placed upon a bier hastily constructed of young intertwined birches, and was borne in triumph, with noise and jollity, before the waiting king.

Meanwhile Gösta lay crouched between the thick branches of the fallen pine. He had secretly both feared and hoped to be detected, but his hiding place was securer than he had supposed. The entire crowd passed by so near that they almost trampled upon him; yet no one noticed, amidst the general exhileration, that someone lay amongst the branches.

Chagrined, almost angry, the boy arose and followed the track of the hunters toward the road. Here he met Daniel and the driver, who had sought him in vain, and who now stood staring with astonishment at the sight of the hunters, who, some on foot and some on horseback, presently disappeared on the road to Kungsör.

Gösta Bertelsköld returned to his father and brother, who impatiently waited for him. The count was in a bad humor; instead of being greeted as a victor, Gösta received sharp reproaches. The count scarcely deigned to question him about the fate of the bear; Gösta lacked courage to describe the strange part he had played as a poacher, and thus his victory remained unknown to all, except Daniel, to whose bosom the unknown victor confided his success, his shame, and his misfortune. They were still fully six miles from Kungsör; but before they arrived there, something happened at the next inn.

CHAPTER X.

"THE CROWN STEWARD."

WHEN the travellers reached Mölna hostelry, four miles from Kungsör, they found the yard filled with people, who had assembled, partly on account of the king's presence, partly to see the slain bear. A huntsman was just reading a proclamation, to the effect that the unknown shooter who could prove himself to be the slayer of the bear was invited to ask the king for a mark of royal favor.

Many rumors were afloat, and ran from mouth to mouth. The story of the mysterious fourth shot had already got a touch of the superstition of the time. Some insisted that it had come from the air; some, that it had come from the ground. Some were fully convinced that only the genii of the woods had fired the shot. Still others pretended to know that the crown prince had a goblin at his side, and in all danger was under its protection; and although the goblin mostly chose to be invisible, yet there were people who insisted upon having seen him, in a gray jacket, red cap, and red mittens, from which the conclusion was drawn that much blood would be shed during the next reign. Those, finally, who considered themselves wiser than the rest, looked slyly at the king's favorite hunter, old Håkan, who was usually sent on dangerous expeditions to take charge of the prince, and who was now secretly regarded as the real slayer of the bear.

But neither Håkan, nor anyone else, appeared to claim the promised reward. The king was said to be very ill-humored about it. Those who knew his violent and suspicious nature began to fear that if there were

too much delay before the man presented himself, the royal grace might easily change into royal displeasure.

Bertelsköld noticed that the people in the yard were unusually silent, and only whispered among themselves. About twenty horses stood saddled, for the king, the prince, and their suite. But it was rumored that the return to Kungsör had been postponed. The king had been riding too violently, had perhaps caught a cold, and was suffering from the usual complaint of his last years, nausea and headache. The crown prince, too, had been seized by a sudden faintness. It was said that the heavy blow of the bear's paw had now first shown its effect, and that the prince had a feeling as if all the bones in his body were crushed. Yet neither physicians nor medicines were at hand, not even at Kungsör. Such things were despised by the Swedish Charleses.

Under these circumstances, an audience was not to be thought of; and the count went into the hall to wait patiently for horses. He had not been there long, when an unexpected clamor arose in the yard. Fearing that the king might have become very ill, Bertelsköld hastened out to inquire the cause of the noise. But it proved to be quite different from what he had surmised. A small crafty old man, a famous magician from the forests of Wermland, happened to be present, and heard about the king's sickness. In the hope of good fortune, he had boldly forced his way even into the king's room, and with pompous words offered to relieve instantly all complaints of the royal patient. The king listened to him for a while, but then, like a good Christian, becoming highly irritated by such an offer, jumped from his bed, seized a cane, and beat the magic-doctor with his own hand, till he ran out-doors. It was added that he must have been a real magic-doctor, although in a different sense, for the king's violent anger had at once driven away the illness, and he felt himself strong enough to mount his horse. But

Prince Charles was worse; although the king was by no means severe toward his children, except when suffering from one of his dark humors, he had a great intolerance for bodily weakness, and spared neither himself nor others. The prince was very pale, and appeared to be suffering. But it was of no use. In a few minutes the whole party were on horseback (they had vainly tried to persuade the king to drive), and sick and well gallopped away together.

"There rides the absolute king with his first slave," whispered Torsten Bertelsköld, who, with his almost ridiculous concern for his own health, was a complete contrast to the crown-prince.

"*Taisez-vous*," answered the count severely. "The eagle teaches its young to fly. The destiny of Prince Charles is in the hands of God and the future; but one thing is sure: he will make, what you never will—a good soldier."

The horses were now harnessed, and the travellers again started for Kungsör, at some distance behind the swift royal hunting-party, whom they did not even attempt to overtake. Gösta Bertelsköld meanwhile held a very important consultation with Daniel. The secret of the successful shot buzzed in his head like a horned-devil in a glass jar, and yet he dared not let it out. But it was a matter for careful consideration, what he ought to request, at how high a price he ought to sell his secret. It was Daniel who used the word "sell," but it did not suit the taste of the little nobleman.

"I do not deal in bullets," he answered, curtly; "but if the king would appoint me a page to the crown-prince, it would not be at all too much. My father says that I ought to have been a page long ago; but you see, Daniel, the king and he are not on very good terms. I cannot bear some of the pages; they seem to be so immensely proud, although they are only simple noblemen, and some of them are counts and barons of day before yesterday. But the crown-prince is a bold

fellow! I wager that he is much stronger than you think, Daniel, although he looks like a girl."

Daniel answered by giving the horse a cut, and thus they approached Kungsör a good half-hour after the arrival of the hunting-party. Kungsör is situated at the mouth of Arboga creek, which flows into Lake Galten, on the inner borders of Mälaren, and has never possessed any great importance, except from its lovely situation and Charles XI's special fondness for the place. On the right of the stream was situated an insignificant town, inhabited by peasants, grooms, fishermen, and a few traders. To the left extended stable-buildings for the large stud—horses were a weak point with Charles XI—and nearer the mouth of the river was the royal mansion, a small brick building, with fifteen or twenty rooms in all, designed exclusively for the king and his nearest friends. The king could never offer rooms in the mansion to the numerous travellers and the many foreign ambassadors who visited him here; but they were obliged to procure for themselves as good quarters as possible in the small town on the other side of the stream, where a very modest inn had been established. The king's enemies said that he lived so closely from penuriousness—in order not to entertain expensive guests; but the real cause was probably that, with his shyness of character and his retired life, he felt annoyed by the company of strangers, and preferred to be left alone by himself, and not forced to submit to a troublesome etiquette.

Count Bertelsköld found all the rooms of the hostelry occupied by travellers; for the king's presence usually brought together many people, of all kinds, who had something to demand or beg of his majesty. The throng was now unusually large, and the count would have been forced to seek rooms in some of the surrounding cottages, had not the landlord, a Stockholmer, politely offered two of his private rooms,

crowding himself and his family into the third. It was inconvenient, but could not be helped.

Thoughtful and anxious, the count threw himself upon a sofa. His situation was not pleasant. He approached the king to ask for justice; and yet it would be regarded as asking a favor. The king was sick, irritable, snappish; ought Bertelsköld to risk perhaps a taste of the royal cane, which might as easily be laid upon the shoulders of a nobleman as of the simplest servant? At this thought, the count's blood boiled. Majniemi was very dear to him; it was needed for his family, for the education of his children. But now, when its fate perhaps depended upon the poor digestion of a royal stomach, was it worth while to buy it at the price of personal humiliation? No; Bertelsköld resolved to attempt what he ought to attempt—an audience, and an explanation of the titles of his estate; but not a hair's breadth farther. Happen what might, he would enter with proud and lifted brow; with proud and lifted brow he would depart.

He sent a request, and received, contrary to his expectation, the answer that he would be granted an audience at four o'clock in the afternoon. The messenger stated that his majesty felt better again, and that a bear-festival was in preparation at the king's garden.

The sofa stood in front of a closed door, leading to one of the guest-chambers. As the count whiled away the time till dinner (for which no one waited with greater anxiety than Gösta), he heard voices in the adjoining room, and could not avoid catching abrupt words, uttered by persons who entered, amidst excited conversation.

"He strips us to the skin."

"He robs us of the fruits of years of labor."

"He snatches the very ground from under our feet."

"The towns' donation-land! Unheard of!"

"Forest commissioners! Sheer folly!"

"All taxed lands the crown's! Tyranny!"
"Is not Schiller's gallows yet built?"
"Yet it was we who . . . . "
"Yes, when it was to loosen the nobility's purse."
"Ought we to bear such gross ingratitude?"
"What will you do! he is absolute!"
"But without the burghers . . . . "
"And without the peasants . . . . "
"Hush, speak lower!"

A contemptuous and scornful smile played around Bertelsköld's lips. "Well, well, my dear burghers and peasants, have you at last got so far?" he said to himself. "Do you now understand the crafty ways of the Reduction? Do you now realize what absolutism means? How sweetly and pleasantly it tasted to you when, in your great zeal for the welfare of the crown and of the kingdom, you pushed with both hands the great work which was to sweep away the nobility, like other weeds, from the estates of the country! How easy your efforts seemed then! how dear your labors! how patriotic your zeal! But a new leaf is turned; the hungry child begins to eat father, mother, nurses, godfathers, and the whole pious christening-party. And you do not laugh now! You no longer call down manna from Heaven upon the flesh-pots of Egypt, from which everyone of you hoped to fish up a fat slice! But you ought to hurrah, for your work has succeeded admirably; it has surpassed your boldest expectations; it has swallowed us, and now it swallows you, too, you great, excellent patriots at a low price. The Reduction-soup is done, and the cooks themselves are astonished at it. By heaven, it is superb! I heartily wish you a palatable meal, and I only regret that these holy gentlemen, the priests, are not partakers in your edifying litany."

Let us give a few words of explanation about what Count Bertelsköld called the litany of burghers and peasants.

All three of the common classes, together with the poor nobility, had cheerfully consented to the Reduction of Charles XI, in the three-fold hope that the misery of the kingdom would thereby be relieved, the power of the nobility broken, and they themselves shielded from the storms of the period. Contrary to their expectations, this last hope was disappointed. The lower nobility, which had hoped to retain all donated estates having an income of less than six hundred dollars, began, as early as 1672, to abandon the contest. The same year, the higher nobility, burning with the desire for revenge, aroused the appetite of the Reduction for the property donated to the towns, which also was partly confiscated ; in 1686 and 1689, severe and rigid inquiries were made into the privileges of citizens as to ownership in vessels and chartered companies, etc., and an odious supervision was proposed both as to inherited and acquired property. In 1687 the Reduction annulled the right of the clergy to receive compensation for the so-called "innkeeping," and in 1695 there was great anxiety and alarm, when registration was ordered of all the income which the churches and the clergy enjoyed from the crown. But the clergy, the king's favorites and his most ardent followers, got off the most lightly. The peasants escaped the scheme of the imposter Schiller, who had almost succeeded in confiscating four thousand homesteads to the crown through a false record of titles. But they, as well as the burghers, suffered from the forest-commissions, which, after 1694, inquired into and reported all unlawful encroachments upon the forests, lakes, and rivers of the crown, regardless of any, even the longest, periods of occupancy. But most dangerous of all was the often pronounced doctrine that *the crown was the rightful owner of all taxed estates.* This principle—the extreme consequence of absolutism, from which there was only one step to the doctrine that *all property belonged to the crown*—was, fortunately for

the country, for liberty, and the rights of property, never carried into effect. But after 1693, many taxed homesteads reverted to the crown, since this was a condition to the lessening of taxes in the work of classification. During the king's last years, the Reduction extended far and wide. The feeling of insecurity increased. The power was concentrated into the hands of the king; the treasury was filled, but its broad foundation upon the shoulders of the people began to be undermined by fear and discontent. Folks began to ask if the crown would take all, leaving to the subjects the only thing that remained—Spartan poverty.

But we will return to our story.

After dinner, the younger Bertelskölds amused themselves according to their individual tastes. Gösta went to the stables, to see the beautiful horses; Torsten seated himself to the study of Hugo Grotius. The count, their father, dressed in the court costume of the time—an immense wig, a fine white lace collar, close-fitting long-waisted blue velvet coat, with long hanging cuffs, a yellow silk vest, short blue knee-breeches, black silk stockings, ankle-high shoes or half-boots ornamented with large rosettes, plumed cap, long hanging sabre, and whatever else belonged to the outward appearance of a true gentleman. Of the sword, it should be remarked that according to French fashion it ought to have been very slender and short; but Charles XI disliked these penknives, as he called them, and it was quite natural that his courtiers, even though reluctantly, should follow his example.

Count Bernhard Bertelsköld, now fifty-six years of age, had in his younger days been one of the finest cavaliers under the Regency. A gentle refinement, the perfume of the time of Louis XIV—the delicate taste, the refined manners, which then could only be acquired during a sojourn of many years at foreign courts and in the vicinity of the man who dazzled his century—all this was combined in Bertelsköld with

a proud and resolute bearing, more the result of the many dangers and vicissitudes he had suffered than of his natural temperament, which was mild and originally rather weak. He was not constituted for party hatred; it only clouded his otherwise clear vision, and embittered his otherwise loving soul. Like Magnus De la Gardie, he had aspired to the part of a high-minded Mæcenas, a nobleman illustrious for attainments and merits, not less than for birth and riches. But Bertelsköld's ambition was not over-high; he asked not power, only glory; not fear, only love, perhaps sometimes admiration, for the human heart is weak. If it had depended upon himself, he would have had no enemies; and yet he had many. A consciousness of this had ploughed furrows in his brow and silvered his once beautiful blue-black hair; but still his well-developed figure rose half a head above most men; the mild and intelligent expression which had charmed so many female hearts still shone from his eyes; and his voice had preserved all its charming melody. And besides, in later years, when no longer occupied with diplomatic services, he had a court position as master-of-horse to Queen Hedvig Eleonora, and was supported by her favor—which, however, had not been able to save his fortune. Louis XIV had introduced the fashion of uniforms among military men, and most of the regents, as well as Charles XI, had gradually followed this example; but for civil officials no such customs were yet in vogue, and therefore Bertelsköld wore the dress commonly used by the Swedish nobility and at the court.

Such was the man who was now to present himself before Charles XI; and it must be admitted that the feeling of constraint existing between the king and his subject was founded on both inner and outer contrasts in the disposition of both, their habits and mental constitutions. Charles XI was a powerful spirit, distinguished by high personal virtues, which not even his

bitterest enemies could deny; he was also, when the occasion demanded broad views of the interests of his kingdom, a *great ruler;* and hence much of his work has survived the storms of centuries and become a blessing to generation after generation. But as a man, he sometimes sank even to littleness; he entirely lacked what is called chivalry, and could, for example, never appreciate Gustaf Adolf, whom he and his friends used to call *King Heath-cock*, in derision of his aspiring and adventurous disposition. And as if a Nemesis had chosen to avenge this royal nickname with a similar juggle of a successor toward a predecessor, it is well known that a hundred years later Gustaf III, who was as unable to understand Charles XI as the latter was to appreciate Gustaf Adolf, used to style this same Charles XI "the crown steward"—alluding to the Reduction, which, although of much benefit to the country, often degenerated into meanness, harassment, and greediness, very odious to Gustaf III. Posterity does not acknowledge flattery!

Bertelsköld before his king!—it was the future time of Gustaf III before Charles XI; it was King Heath-cock before the crown steward; it was the knight before the statesman;—contrasts which never could be reconciled, minds which always must of necessity be hostile toward each other.

At precisely four o'clock Bertelsköld stood in the king's ante-chamber; for everything around Charles XI moved with measured punctuality. Yet now he had to wait about ten minutes. He was told that two Finns, a burgher and a peasant, were having audience with the king.

Two men, apparently about fifty years of age, came out. Bertelsköld immediately recognized in them his old enemies, the present deputies, the brothers Larsson, one a merchant in Vasa, the other a peasant in Storkyro. Both looked depressed; their mission must have resulted badly. They and the count exchanged

stiff salutes. Perhaps a light smile flitted across his lips—an involuntary smile at the strange fate which brought together the two antagonistic forces, aristocracy and democracy, on their knees before the third power, autocracy, which swallowed both of them. The Larssons, experienced party leaders, instantly caught his meaning.

"Sir count," whispered the peasant in passing, "even if we fall, the people will not necessarily fall with us."

"No," said the count, in the same tone, "it does not fall, it only kneels."

"The roof is gone, the ground timbers remain," remarked the burgher.

"Yes," answered the count, "and hence it rains in through the roof and the floor rots."

At this point Bertelsköld was summoned, and the short but bitter altercation was interrupted.

Charles XI in his later years was thus described by his contemporary Puffendorff: He was rather below common stature; his hair was black and curly, and was carefully dressed until 1687, when it grew prematurely gray, after which the king wore a wig. His forehead was of moderate height, his eyes small and kindly in expression, his nose straight, his cheeks red, his chin pointed, his lips full, his shoulders broad, his bearing good, his hands large ("shaped only to *take* much," said his enemies), and his feet small. He limped a little, as he had broken his left leg; was very strong, apt in bodily exercise, indefatigable in work and travel, ate fast, drank moderately, and slept but little; was pious, economical, brave in war, loved horses and soldiers, but was cold toward women. He was not imposing in appearance; there was nothing of the majestic in his person; if not known, he would never be taken to be a king. His disposition was simple and natural; yet he was capable of dissimulation. His mental gifts were neither of the best nor of the worst;

but his education had been much neglected ; he spoke neither Latin nor French, and was hardly able to write his name. He had an awkward pronunciation, stammered somewhat, and was unable to sustain a conversation. He dressed simply, wearing always a tight-fitting coat and a long sabre.

At the count's entrance, the king was sitting at a large oaken writing-table, which occupied nearly one-fourth of the extremely simple work-room. Behind his high-backed brown leather chair stood the Reduction man, the son of an apothecary, Jakob Gyllenborg, he who was looked upon as the king's evil genius. Bertelsköld divined immediately what he might expect. He bowed silently, waiting to be addressed.

But the king seemed to be waiting also, and said, after a gruff greeting and a pause : "Well, what is it? You have complained of the reduction of Majniemi?"

"Yes, your majesty!" Bertelsköld answered calmly.

"It was unnecessary. By what right do you complain of a lawful act which has only the fault of being fifteen years later than it should have been?"

"I have in my petition presented the legal grounds of my rights, and come personally to appeal to your majesty's paternal justice."

"Find what the count has to say," said the king, turning to Gyllenborg. While the latter was looking through a large portfolio which contained papers referring to unsettled business, the king examined the last yearly accounts for Kungsör's stud, which he had just received ; he reduced with his own hand several items of expense charged to the crown, and closely scrutinized all the figures. Sometimes his passion for economy seemed to conflict with his passion for horses ; a figure already crossed out or altered was again changed, and the first correction erased ; a remark written in the margin was crossed out, or an increase of wages was granted to the best stablemen.

Thus absorbed the king seemed to have entirely

forgotten the presence of Bertelsköld. Either because the desired papers were really difficult to find, or, what is more probable, because Gyllenborg was not unwilling to let the proud count feel his superiority, it is certain that it took him a long time; and Bertelsköld had meanwhile to wait standing and in deep silence, only now and then interrupted by the king's coughing, or a half-audible outbreak of dissatisfaction with the accounts.

At last the desired paper was found, and Gyllenborg summed up its contents:

"Count Bertelsköld refers to a donation of Queen Christina; but according to the decision of his royal majesty and the states-councils, no royal donation can affect the inalienable rights of the crown. Further, the count wishes to have the estate considered as compensation for a claim of his late father against the crown, existing since 1644, amounting to one hundred thousand dollars in silver; but the commission explains, that in that case the estate is to be considered as a mortgaged estate, according to the decision of the assembly of the states in 1686, and ought only to be enjoyed by the count until the crown should redeem the mortgage, or until the income should reach the amount of the crown's debt with an added yearly interest of five per cent. Since Majniemi yields an income of ten thousand dollars a year, and thus the debt of the crown, with interest, ought to have been cancelled after the lapse of twenty years, or in the year 1667, the estate has been lawfully reclaimed from Count Bertelsköld, and he has been decreed to restore to the crown the surplus which he has received—namely, twenty-eight years' income, amounting to two hundred and eighty thousand dollars in coin."

"Sir count, you forget my humble review of the incomes of Majniemi for the last thirty years," Bertelsköld remarked. "It is proved indisputably that in two years only, 1682 and 1689, the income reached the

maximum which the commission has taken as the average. I have explained that many years the income diminished to three and even two thousand dollars, and that the average cannot with any justice be estimated higher than six thousand five hundred dollars a year. This alone, for a term of forty-eight years, reduces the claim of the crown one hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars."

"It is not our business to examine accounts," said the king, sullenly. "For that we have appointed a commission, by whose decision you must abide."

"And the commission," Gyllenborg remarked, "cannot take into consideration that the estate has probably been mismanaged for some time, and the income thereby diminished. The crown must have its property."

"Your majesty," replied Bertelsköld, without honoring the Reduction man with a glance, "I have not come hither to occupy the precious time of my king with private accounts. I appeal to other and higher considerations, not for my own advantage or ruin—that is a slight matter—but for the weal of the kingdom, and of every man. Your majesty has accomplished for the common prosperity and power of Sweden what few kings have done combined. Perhaps your majesty has received but little thanks so far, but posterity will understand that your majesty has aimed at one thing above all else—the weal of the country and of the people. Do not dim the lustre of the greatness of such noble intentions by petty deeds which might increase the income of the crown by a few hundred thousand dollars, but which might cost your majesty what can never be outweighed by millions—what is higher and more sacred than the combined interests of the crown, the people, and of your majesty: justice! Do not believe these creeping flatterers who persuade your majesty that the interest of the crown is different from that of the subjects. If the country's

necessities have justified the Reduction, let it now suffice : many tears at last cause even silver to rust. The state is saved, its power secured, its enlightenment increased, its treasury filled, its army and navy in a condition which commands respect. When the reign of your majesty has brought forth so many good fruits, let it be sufficient ; do not ask for more ; do not put weapons into the hands of your majesty's enemies and traducers. The power of the nobility is broken ; be mild, your majesty, be wise ! Do not trample on the fallen ; do not press the last farthing from those already poor ! Your majesty is an absolute king ; upon this great power rests great responsibility ; and whatever the states may resolve, the commission examine, or the self-made laws decree, it will all recoil upon your majesty and your counsellors for the judgment of God, for the opinion of the people, for present and all future times. I beseech your majesty by all the high virtues which the world has learned to admire in Charles XI,"—here the count bent a knee before the king—"listen to the voice of truth from a man who has already sacrificed seven-eighths of his property to the state, and who has not come to beg for grace for his last remnant, but only to demand justice, not merely for himself, but for all ! Restrain the further proceedings of the Reduction ! Repeal the last deeds of injustice ! Dismiss these men who sell your majesty's honor for a trifle ! Heed the warnings of Providence ! Listen to the cries of hunger and the lamentations of the wronged ! Be great, your majesty, be noble ! And firmer than upon the slippery ground of profit, your majesty's fame and your kingdom's weal will be built upon the eternal foundation of justice, magnanimity, and the undivided love of a whole people !"

Bertelsköld arose, awaiting with enthusiasm, almost with humility, the effect of his words, which Gyllenborg had several times vainly tried to interrupt.

The king, amazed by language such as he had not heard for years, had silently permitted his bold subject to finish. But he had risen from his chair, a dark flush covered his usually pale features, and he had seized Gyllenborg by the arm so firmly that the latter made a grimace of pain. When Bertelsköld paused, there came at first only a few broken words from the king's lips. A storm was breaking.

"Responsibility!" he exclaimed. "Responsibility? . . . . Was I not right? . . . . They would rebel against their master and king! . . . . They have oppressed my people! . . . . These petty kings! . . . . They have revelled in their festivals with the country's gold! . . . . French apes! . . . . And now they talk to me of responsibility . . . . Madmen! Rebels!"

And the king walked with quick steps about the room, looking for his sword, which, fortunately, he had just put aside, when feeling ill. Beside himself with rage, when he could not find his sword, he rushed to the folding-doors, threw them open, and, pointing at Bertelsköld, cried to two guards on duty with their long muskets:

"*Shoot that dog!*"

Bertelsköld unbuckled his sword and laid it silently at the king's feet. Not a feature of his face was changed; calm, exalted, respectful, he remained in his place, and only his dark shining eyes surveyed the king at once gently, sadly, and reproachfully.

Gyllenborg stood motionless from terror. The guards were too much frightened to know what to do. One of them kneeled down; the other lifted his gun, but hesitated to pull the trigger. . . . A pause ensued, ominous, uncertain, painful.

The king again paced vehemently back and forth, but without repeating his command. Then he halted directly in front of Bertelsköld, who stood immovable with the same sorrowful glance, looking him sharply in the face, and said:

"*Are you not afraid?*"

"No," answered Bertelsköld. "At Warsaw and Copenhagen, under your majesty's father, and at Lund, under your majesty's own command, I learned the Swedish habit not to fear."

Charles XI stamped upon the floor. "But it is my will that men shall fear God and the king!" he said.

Bertelsköld did not answer. He bowed his fine gray head, slightly but with a respectful air, and continued to look at the king, with that indescribable gaze whose mild lustre might move a heart of stone.

It is difficult to say what powers were at that moment combatting for the king's soul. Perhaps he wavered between two contending feelings: one urging him to have the rebel shot down, the other tempting him to clasp the rebel in his arms.

"Go your way!" he said, at last, in a voice which was meant to be severe, but which betrayed far more the conflict between the hostile impulses struggling for supremacy in the royal bosom.

Bertelsköld perceived this, but would not press his advantage further. "May God Almighty enlighten and preserve your majesty through all your days!" he said humbly, and retired with steps as firm as when he had entered the king's apartment.

The doors were closed behind him, and the guards resumed their places, glad that the affair had ended as it did. It is said that the king, when alone with Gyllenborg, turned violently toward him and said:

"It is you who shall answer before the judgment of God for all the evil said about the Reduction!"* What Gyllenborg answered is not known, but it is a fact that the Reduction still proceeded, until the king's death.

While these events took place in the royal mansion, young Count Gösta had undertaken to assist the stablemen in riding the horses down to drink from the brook,

*Charles XI is said to have rolled this responsibility upon Gyllenborg, on his death-bed.

which had already thrown off its icy cover. The stablemen had mischievously given him a young colt, not yet broken, hoping to see him quickly and laughably thrown to the ground. But Gösta was not one to be thus trifled with. Without saddle, with only a bridle, he managed the colt so well that after a few vain rearings it was obliged to recognize his superiority, and willingly allowed itself to be ridden forth and back. Prince Charles had happened to see this, and with the eye of a connoisseur had wondered at the skill of the strange boy. The faithful Daniel availed himself of this incident, stole back to the hostelry for the gun, and, with the proof in his hand revealed to the prince how the affair with the bear had really happened. The results were decisive for the whole future life of Gösta Bertelsköld.

The prince wished to test once more the courage of the young rider, and therefore mounted his horse and rode at full speed toward the returning horsemen. When he met them, he attempted to ride straight against the side of Gösta's colt, with the intention of riding him down—a somewhat violent and dangerous game, often indulged in by the king, his father. But he did not succeed, Gösta, although unprepared, turned aside so quickly that the prince's horse only brushed him lightly; the latter immediately turned round, caught the boy's hand, and said: "I see you are good at both riding and shooting! If you will stay with me, you shall have a good gun and a good horse."

"Certainly, I will!" answered Gösta, beside himself with joy.

"Agreed!" said Prince Charles.

An hour later Count Bertelsköld received, beside his sword, which was returned by one of the king's adjutants, the following letter, written by Charles XI's own hand, of which the bad orthography was more than counterbalanced by the royal and noble character of its contents:

"Sir Count :—We send herewith Your Sword with the wish that You will still use it with honor in Our service. Your Majnemi cannot be spared, for the law's sake—whatever debt falls to you beside, We will now and forever remit. In Proof of Our royal Grace, We will furthermore appoint You as Our ambassador to Berljn, and Your Son Göstaff as page to Our dear Son, his princely Grace, Prince Charles. We commend You to God Almighty, with Our Grace.

"Kungsöhr, 24 Febr., 1696. Carolus.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT FAMINE.

"O VASA, thou proud, thou glorious name, the brightest upon the escutcheon of the North—thou radiant star to which centuries look up—thou mighty banner around which heroes have bled—thou peaceful sheaf of grain which crowned with harvest the work of cultivation—it is then here that thou hast found a mound of earth where thou couldst set thy foot and hope to live from age to age after the lustre of the crown had passed away! I have travelled over the world; Europe was filled with thy fame, and it has crossed the ocean to New Sweden; but I have found no cottage where thy name was written over the doorway, not a stone bearing thy name, not even Schwedenstein, where thy greatest hero fell. I have travelled through Sweden and all its provinces around the Baltic, which they embrace like a bride; all Sweden was charmed by thy glory, which also was its own, so that for thy sake it forgot its bleeding wounds and the bones of its sons whitening upon a foreign soil; but

vainly have I traced its charts and searched along its roads; I found nothing bearing thy name, except a little farm in Skeptuna parish and this insignificant spot on the coast of the Bothnian Gulf. Is, then, greatness so humble that while it fills the world it can content itself with a few feet of earth for a grave, and a few roods of ground for the glorification of its name! Fortunate little Vasa! where is there to be found in the wide world's circle a town which thou wouldst envy, and which would not envy thee! Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople, the capitals of the world, bear with pride the names of their heroes; and this name only belongs to one. But thy name, thou secret refuge for the memory of the great, bears within it a cluster of memories beloved by history and admired by nations; and even if thou thyself shouldst die, be sure thy name will die not; it will live from century to century, to all eternity!"

These words fell from the lips of Count Bertelsköld, as, accompanied by his steward, Master Pehr, he approached Vasa by the shore road through Malaks and Solw, and the little town, with its narrow streets and red-painted houses, lay prettily before him in the sunshine. It was in the beginning of March, 1697. The reason why we now find the count in Finland, although, as we know, the king had appointed him ambassador to Berlin, was, briefly, that Bertelsköld, exceptionally and by royal grace, had obtained a respite in the delivery of Majniemi until next "moving-day"—the fourteenth of March, 1697; and in consequence of this he had asked and received permission to visit Finland, for the purpose of arranging his affairs and bidding farewell to his paternal home. A further reason for the presence of the count in the vicinity of Vasa is connected with one of the gloomies memories the centuries have left in the North—the so-called "hunger years," or the great famine of 1695, 1696, and 1697.

The latter portion of the reign of Charles XI was attended by a long series of failures of harvest, caused by unusual disturbances in the regular course of the seasons. Ever since 1688, when the harvest first failed, and in an increasing degree through the eight years following, nature seemed to have been thrown out of balance. The summer of 1689 was unusually hot, and the autumn so dry that the grain withered and people were often forced to go many miles to water their cattle and grind their flour. Then followed a very severe winter, with such a famine in Dalarne that great numbers of the people emigrated, in search of new and better homes. The years 1689 and 1690 were visited by plagues and forest fires. In the year 1691, spring came early and precipitately ; on the twenty-eighth of April, ripe strawberries were picked in Stockholm. During the summer there was a great deal of thunder, hail, and rain. In 1692, in April, there came a frost unprecedented for that season. People drove upon the ice, far out to sea. Many froze to death. In Middle Europe an unusual quantity of snow fell, followed by floods and earthquakes. In 1693, the winter was very cold, spring and summer very hot. Immense swarms of grasshoppers devastated Hungary and Germany ; the volcanoes became active ; Ætna and Hecla spouted fire. The omens multiplied. In Sweden there was a heavy snow-fall in May, but afterwards there were drought and heat through the entire summer. The grain made but little growth ; the price of flour rose to twenty dollars a barrel.

In 1687 and 1688, the harvest failed in Finland ; but the following years, including 1693, gave good and sometimes rich harvests,—and it is related of this "good old time" that grain was so abundant that loads of it often stood for several days on the market-places of the towns without finding buyers. But all lived for the day only ; nobody thought of the future. No general storehouses were established, no supplies

were kept ; the birds of the air devoured the wasted grain, and mankind enjoyed the days, unheeding Nature's foreboding sighs and warnings, already widely shown. And then the calamity fell, heavy, quick, and unexpected, over the Northern lands.

In the year 1694, frequent earthquakes occurred in Southern Europe, hard times and famine in Middle Europe. In brilliant and wealthy Paris, ninety-two thousand persons are said to have died from hunger and disease. Hail spoiled the harvest in one of the granaries of Sweden—Pomerania. In the other, Finland, the crop was scanty, and there was no surplus from former years. Already people were using the bark of trees for food, and already human beings were sometimes found dead from hunger, along the roadsides.

The year 1695 began with a winter so cold that its equal had not been known since 1658, when Charles X marched across Little Belt. In Germany, the rivers were covered with ice so thick that the Catholics in some places had to eat meat during Lent, because no fish could be got, even for its weight in gold. Many people froze to death. The parish registers of Finland mention that the wolves attacked people in their houses. In Portugal and Spain, a third of the cattle died for want of fodder. A late and cold spring followed this winter, as we have seen was the case at Majniemi, so that the spring sowing was not finished until midsummer ; and the weather afterwards was cold and rainy. The grain did not ripen ; a few green stalks were seen in the fields, and all else was black ground, and hence this year has been known as "the great black-year" In Nyland, the rye did not blossom until the last of July, and in the beginning of September the frost killed the half-ripened grain. Misery increased. Rye flour cost ten dollars a barrel, an unheard-of price. The noblemen and the rich peasants dismissed half their laborers and servants, to get rid of

feeding them. The king prohibited the exportation of grain, and imported some from abroad. Seven full-loaded vessels were lost in Qvarken in the autumn storms.

The year 1696 opened with quite different but no less unwonted forebodings. The winter was spring-like in mildness. As early as the second of February, grass of a finger's length was seen at Stockolm. About the twentieth of February, the ice disappeared, the swallows arrived in Holland, and many people began to sow. But on the seventh of March the cold returned; all lakes and bays were again covered with ice so thick that people drove across them. The spring seed was spoiled; the autumn seed had rotted in the ground. The few who had anything left to sow were deceived also in this hope. The summer became chilly. The night before the eighth of August, a frost appeared in some tracts of Finland, so heavy that in the morning the ears of grain were found coated with thick ice. Four successive nights after the twenty-second of August, there came another frost, which finished the grain. And yet the autumn came on so mild that ripe strawberries were had in Stockholm the first of September and fresh raspberries the tenth of October (old style). There was almost no harvest. Records are found in Mäntsälä church journals of that year, mentioning that hares and some birds—as the cuckoo—disappeared; the cock ceased crowing; the lynx, usually so sly, ventured into the towns; hungry rats came in immense numbers where they had never been before, and ate everything they could find. In Kesälaks, unknown foreign birds are said to have been seen in the forests.

Now for the first time Charles XI began to feel the burden of absolutism; for the whole nation threw the responsibility for its misery upon him who had the entire power and wanted all the property. Already in 1696, when in Norrland and Finland so many soldiers

died from hunger that the regiments had scarcely half their number left, many, remembering how these troops had been the king's pride, likened him to King David, whom God punished because he so proudly counted his men. King Pharoah, it was said, had yet a Joseph who interpreted his warning dreams; here many signs had gone before, but no Joseph had understood them. Such things grieved the king deeply. During the two years 1695 and 1696, he helped the people by selling more than one hundred and ten thousand barrels of grain at a low price; but this did not go very far.

For now—from Michaelmas of 1696, the entire year 1697, and into the year following—there was severer and more general want through the entire North than had ever been known before, or, with God's help, will ever be known again. Whoever may wish to see what a people can endure without perishing, and even be ready, two or three years later, to reconquer half of Europe, let him follow us.

None of the provinces of Sweden, not even Skaane, escaped the anguish of those days. Southern Sweden was the region suffering least; next, Pomerania; next, Middle Sweden. Norrland suffered much, Esthonia and Livonia still more. Finland probably most of all.

The successive forms in which the distress usually showed its pale face—paler and more ghastly as the the spring of 1697 approached — may be briefly given. First, the land-owners began to dismiss their servants, and the servants and laborers left the land-owners because the latter could no longer give them food. Crowds of these wanderers sought the towns; the wages for work, already low, fell to less than nothing, so that for their board alone more hands were to be had than were needed, and young men were eager to enlist as soldiers. But most of the towns, except a few like Stockholm, Åbo, Riga, Reval, were poor themselves, almost without bread, and those that were not soon became so. The throngs pouring in from the country found neither

work nor bread, but drifted in wretched beggary, and most of them perished at last from hunger and all forms of misery. Fryxell cites a letter from Stockholm, dated April 24, 1697: "Many thousands of poor people have come from the country to the capital. They stagger, creep, or lie about the streets. Nobody will take them into their houses. Thus these poor victims are left to spend the still wintry nights in the open air, lying here and there beside the walls. Many never rise again, and in the morning the city guard comes and carries away the dead bodies, which are thrown into large pits and buried all together."

Thus it was the floating population which first felt the distress. But soon it reached farther. The land-owning or land-tilling peasant and his tenants soon had recourse to bark; for its use was not so uncommon in Finland and Northern Sweden, even in ordinary years. This bark (of fir) was ground into flour and baked into bread, or it was cut in pieces, chopped very fine, pounded, and cooked in water to a kind of porridge or mush, and eaten without other food. The dish was not particularly palatable or healthful, but it was eatable, so long as a portion of rye or barley flour was mixed with it. But the portion of flour grew smaller and smaller, and at last disappeared entirely in most regions. Then misery looked for help in other directions. The pure bark bread was black and hard as stone. They then tried to mix it with flour made of the chaff of rye and barley, and this was still a delicacy. When this was gone, there followed, one after another, ground mast, husks, straw, and moss. These were also exhausted; and then attempts were made with grass, nettles and other herbage, among the rest, roots of marsh calla (*calla palustris*). Such bread was difficult to make; it crumbled at the least touch, and was easily burned to ashes in the oven. The peasants were accustomed to their fermented small-beer, but there was now no malt. They tried to

brew beer of straw, juniper, or sweet-gale; but it would not ferment, soon spoiled, and tasted badly. Turnips and cabbage-roots were the recourse of many; potatoes were not even known by name—this blessed American product which now gives the Finnish peasant almost half his food, and which more than anything else makes the return of another year like 1697 well-nigh impossible. On the coasts, and in some tracts rich with lakes, the population suffered less, because they at least had fish; it is not stated, but is quite probable, that this harvest of the sea saved many thousands from destruction. The milk and meat of cattle did not go far; want of fodder had joined the famine, and furnished a double reason for the slaughter of the cattle, so that at last only the wealthiest had a creature to take to pasture, in the dreary spring of 1697. When the crowds of hungry people, strolling around, met with a living animal, they immediately killed it, tore it to pieces, drank its blood, and ate its flesh without taking time to cook it. Wild fowls were seldom found, as the young were destroyed by the cold summers. When the cattle, swine, and sheep began to fail, they turned to horses, dogs, cats, rats, crows, hides of beasts, dead cattle, and all kinds of garbage. But it did not stop there. Stories, at which humanity shudders, relate that parents ate their dead children, and that children in their despair ate the dead bodies of their parents.

From the cottage of the peasant the distress found its way to the parsonages, first the most remote, the others afterward. Bark-bread and bran-flour were served on the tables of poor chaplains. At last the hard times reached the towns, the inland places first, the sea-ports later. The ice closed their harbors, the storms destroyed their vessels. Hungry country-people swarmed over them like rats, devouring everything they could get hold of. In Stockholm a bakery was plundered. The king had every house searched; whoever had a larger supply than was indispensably

required, was forced to sell it. But all was in vain. Rye cost fifteen to twenty dollars a barrel. The last supplies of this also were exhausted in the spring. The Danish minister could not get sufficient flour for his household needs for several weeks, and was compelled to import it especially from Elsinore. In the smaller towns it was if possible worse. The entire kingdom hungered, from the meanest hind up to those highest in society.

From all this hunger, privation, and unwholesome food, there arose debility, sickness, and death. The strongest became so weak that they could scarcely keep on their feet, still less were able to work. In many cases the body swelled and grew perfectly stiff; in others, the limbs withered away, the skin grew dark-brown, the face unrecognizable. Everywhere human beings roamed about like ghosts, till at last merciful death ended their sufferings, often very suddenly, in the church, in the yard, on the road, or at work. The hand of the beggar stiffened as he held it out for alms; the mother's voice grew silent as she tried with cradle-songs to lull her hungry child to sleep. Plagues followed in the track of the famine; the death-angel raged everywhere unchecked.

"Fifty to sixty miles north of Stockholm," says a contemporaneous witness, "very few living persons were seen upon the roads, only here and there some withered wretch sitting by the bodies of beasts that had died of famine." "I shudder still," says another contemporary in Dorpat, "when thinking of all the misery I was obliged to witness; how famished people, old and young, daily crept around the streets, with their faces wrinkled and black with hunger." They died in such great numbers that at last it became impossible to bury them, and they were simply thrown upon each other in heaps in the church-yard. "At that time," says H. Forsius, in his description of Helsingfors, published in 1755, "the present cemetery at Kampen was

consecrated, as the city burial-ground was not sufficient to contain the many people who had come from the country. Can anyone hear, without a bleeding heart, old folks relate that people walking on the streets fell over each other dead, from want of food? Can anyone think without sorrow of how many are said to have gone to the grave-yard to await approaching death? They themselves saw the place where their tired bones should rest. Their torn rags became their shroud and coffin. Two weak legs composed their bier, and a hungry companion the procession following them in silence to the tomb. Let us not read this without kissing the hand of the *Lord*, who has so long preserved Sweden from such a famine!"

It has not been possible to make any close enumeration of the victims of this great devastation. It is estimated that in Esthonia and Livonia fifty thousand people died from hunger. From several places in Finland accounts are lacking, as so many of the church journals of that time were destroyed during the ensuing great war period, while others were taken to Sweden, or were scattered in other ways. What is known is, however, sufficient to measure the extent of the misery to some degree.

In March, 1697, Charles XI is said to have received at once six messages from Finland, informing him that eighty thousand and nine hundred persons had died there from hunger; that nine parishes were depopulated, and the churches closed. Two weeks later, the king received similar information regarding five other churches in that country. In one parish, one hundred and fifty persons had died from hunger in a single day. Nearly all the soldiers of Nyland's regiment are said to have died from starvation. From the first of September in 1696, till the same date in 1697, over sixty thousand persons perished thus in the Åbo diocese; in East Bothnia alone, nearly twenty thousand; in Nyland and Tavastehus counties, nearly thirty thousand. In the

last-named county, eight hundred and fifty-seven homesteads were rendered desolate. The following numbers will serve for illustration: Lojo had, within the time mentioned, eight hundred and forty dead; Karis, four hundred and thirty-six; Janakhala, one thousand one hundred and fifty-two, and sixty-nine stranger beggars; Tammela, six hundred and fifty-eight, and one hundred and twenty-four strangers; Sääksmäki, seven hundred and eighty-nine, and one hundred and sixteen strangers; Nådendal, four hundred and one, and one hundred and seventy-eight strangers; Raumo, three hundred and seventy; Björneborg and Ulfsby, seven hundred and sixteen; Hvittis, six hundred and seventy-one, and one hundred and seventy-three strangers; Letala, three hundred and seventy-three, and seventy-one strangers; Tyrvis, eight hundred and sixty-five; Kangasala, one thousand three hundred and four; Birkala, seven hundred and eighty-nine; Orihvesi, eight hundred and forty; Ruovesi, one thousand and seventeen; Längelmäki, six hundred and eighty-five, and one hundred and fifty strangers; Messuby, eight hundred and seventy-three, and twenty-five strangers; Uleå town and parish, one thousand five hundred and ninety-two (the town alone seven hundred and thirteen); Limingo, eight hundred and ninety-five, and one hundred and twenty-two strangers; Kalajoki, one thousand two hundred and thirty-eight, and sixty-six strangers; Brahestad, four hundred and eighty-four, and thirty-eight strangers; Kemi, six hundred and seventy-six; Paldamo, one thousand six hundred and twelve; Sotkamo, one thousand five hundred and eighty-four; Old Carleby, eight hundred and fourteen; New Carleby, five hundred and fourteen; Pedersöre, one thousand and twenty-six. In the month of May, 1697, one hundred and sixty-five dead were buried in Åbo.

The number for Borgå diocese is not given. It is only known that two thousand two hundred and ninety-four persons died in 1697 in Borgå town and parish;

four hundred and thirty-nine in Helsinge ; five hundred and thirty-three in Sibbo ; eight hundred and fifteen in Perno ; one thousand nine hundred and six in Hollola ; five hundred and forty in Orimattila ; six hundred and seventy in Elimä ; one thousand two hundred and sixty-six in Hauho ; one thousand one hundred and sixty-five in Lampis, etc. In round numbers, the whole loss of human life in Finland in 1697 is estimated at one hundred thousand ; and for all the three years of famine at least one hundred and fifty thousand dead, or seven to eight times more than common. And all this at a time when the whole population of Finland was probably not much more than about one third of its present population, or about half a million.

Such severe visitations of Providence did not pass away without leaving wounds and scars. The great conquest and cultivation of the soil was stopped ; the wilderness occupied again the newly-tilled ground, and crowded the husbandman from the soil it had lost years before. Sometimes the bands of social order were loosened ; in the St. Mickel tracts, the commoners plundered the mansions of the nobility in 1696, and killed the tax-collectors of the crown. Extreme need makes man selfish ; and after people had for a long time shared with the needy, the ties of sympathy were sometimes relaxed or worn out, so that those who possessed did not give, and those who were able took by force, and the tears of misery ran traceless into the sand, and the sighs of despair died away in space, unheard by human mercy. Did not most of them, as Forsius says, sit and look at their own graves ?

But God's might let all this last only for a time ; and even during these years, the people, as a whole, bore the misfortune with a manly courage. Society might have gone in pieces ; but it held together. Where many would have fallen or despaired, there stood the Finn still erect, iron-firm, enduring, full of

confidence. The best proof of this is the quickness with which traces of the devastation were, if not obliterated, at least softened. An open sea, a freer importation of provisions, a favorable crop in 1698 and 1699, and the plough again began to furrow the fields, and hope returned, and human relations re-adjusted themselves to mutual assistance and advancement, and the Finnish people drew breath so deeply that in the immediate future it was capable of bearing, with greater glory, a heavier burden than before. What a lesson for all times! So true it is that "he only is lost who abandons himself."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LARSSON FAMILY.

WHEN Count Bertelsköld for the first time in his life drove into the little town of Vasa, he was surprised to find indications of a certain wealth, although mixed with great and unmistakable poverty. At the small, pretty, red-painted houses, with their double doors neatly ornamented by skilful wood-carvers, he occasionally noticed an emaciated beggar leaning against the fence or fumbling at the doors; and—what most surprised the count—all these doors were bolted. In the streets reigned a gloomy silence, broken only by cries of hunger; but in the count's track followed a noisy crowd which he could not keep away. Amongst the thousand difficulties of his journey, this was perhaps the greatest. Wherever he went, starving people flocked around him, and when he had nothing more to give, some of them threw themselves before the horses, while others, when he at last got

free, ran breathless after his sleigh till they fell down exhausted.

Bertelsköld had hoped to avoid these distressing scenes when he approached the Vasa regions, which were justly considered the granaries of Sweden. It was somewhat better in Nerpes and Malaks, as they there had fish from last year. But great numbers flocked to Vasa from the poorer inland tracts—Ilmola, Lappo, Ruovesi. These wanderers covered all the roads in the vicinity of the town so closely that the travellers could with difficulty force their way through them, and even the good-tempered Master Pehr lost his patience and thrust them roughly away, when they placed themselves upon the runners of the sleigh, or hung by the horses' bridles, crying in piercing tones "Leipä ! leipä !" (bread, bread). But the poor wretches were deaf alike to prayers and threats ; they continued to follow the fine-looking stranger ; and thus Bertelsköld made his appearance in the town with a yelling retinue of at least sixty or seventy beggars.

Scarcely had he reached the market-place before a wild scene gave a new and terrible illustration of the horrors of the famine. A large and shaggy bear-dog, driven by hunger, had ventured into the streets. The sight of him gave an instant signal for a hot chase. All rushed after him ; the weakest beggar gained new strength from the sight of this unexpected prey, and succeeded in getting his benumbed limbs in motion. The poor dog was hunted from street to street, from yard to yard, more eagerly than a wolf in the forest. Sometimes he turned round, and showed his teeth ; but in vain ; the crowd heeded them not ; new flight, new pursuit ! At last the poor hunted animal entered a narrow alley between two houses, from which there was no escape ; here he was attacked with sticks, stones, and pieces of ice. For a moment he defended himself with desperate courage ; but at last he succumbed, was dragged forth in triumph, taken to the

market-place, skinned, roasted, and eaten—all in a few moments' time.

But this was one degree higher in the scale of humanity, for Bertelsköld had on similar occasions seen the meat eaten raw on the spot. Sadly he turned away, and inquired for the house of the merchant Larsson. He was shown one of the prettiest houses in Köpman Street, distinguished by its large window-panes and its unusually richly ornamented doors. But the door was bolted, like all the others, and most of the windows had the shutters closed. The count knocked vigorously.

After a long waiting, a voice from within called out: "Go away. We have no grain to sell, and no bread to give!"

"Say to your master that Count Bertelsköld is here expressly to see him," cried the count, in answer.

Some time passed, and then a red-cheeked girl peeped out from an upper window and stared curiously at the strangers from head to foot.

"Well," cried the count again, "will Father Larsson let me travel two hundred miles to see him, and then shut his doors in my face?"

The girl withdrew from the window; again some time passed, and then the door was opened. The owner of the house came out to meet the count, not without some embarrassment, and with many excuses for the inhospitable reception.

"We live as in war-times," he said; "day and night our houses are besieged by hungry people, and if we did not bolt the door, we would be entirely plundered in an hour. But step in, if you please, sir count, and share what a poor house can offer in a breadless time."

The person who thus welcomed the count was a man of about fifty-four years of age, dressed in a tight-fitting woollen jacket, home-spun knee-breeches, and shoes of the fashion of the common people. His per-

son had something at once of peasant and nobleman; habits of daily life had not entirely worn off a certain independent civility of manner, acquired during the time when the wealthy burgher, as a deputy and party leader, was courted by high and low in the capital of the kingdom. Further than this, nothing in the house gave evidence of the poverty which he had indicated. The active matron, a youth of twenty, a pair of hearty round-cheeked girls, the daughters of the house, testified by their whole appearance that the family did not lack at least the necessaries of life. The contents of the table, which was immediately spread for the guests, did not discredit this supposition. It contained something very rare at that time—pure rye bread, not fresh, for no one had dared to bake for a long time, for fear that the odor of the fresh bread would drive the street beggars to despair. Perhaps still rarer was the smoked leg of mutton and the mug of ale which were served for the count. Never had the high-born aristocrat said grace with sincerer devotion.

Bertelsköld, anxious to efface all recollection of the last hostile meeting with the Larssons in the antechamber of the king, complimented the family upon its pleasing appearance. He was the more delighted, he added, as for two weeks he had seen only pale and emaciated faces; and as for the table, he would frankly confess that he had not eaten a hearty meal for a week, although he had travelled from parsonage to parsonage, for bark bread, salt herring, and sometimes a little small-beer, were all the delicacies the poor ministers had to offer.

At these words the host and hostess looked around uneasily, as though to assure themselves that no one heard this untimely praise of the house's abundance.

"Yes, sir count," said Larsson, "it does not help our neighbors to starve ourselves. We have given as far as we could, but we have scraped up a little for ourselves from the bottom of the grain-bins. Go and

see, little Maja, if the door is well barred. Bad times, sir count; no security, vagrants overrunning everything. We may be thankful that the bread is not snatched from our mouths."

"Do you know one thing, good Master Larsson," said the count; "if these poor wretches outside were of any other nationality, it would be of little use to bar a door. Have you soldiers and police in the town?"

"God forbid! At Korsholm there are some guards, but here we have only three town watchmen, of whom one is lame, the second deaf, and the third good for nothing but to beat the evening drum."

"And no disturbances have taken place? I mean serious disorders, such as plundering houses and killing people?"

"God save us! how the count talks! Certainly nothing of the kind has happened."

"Well," said the count, with dignity, "that you may not think worse of our people than they deserve, I will tell you how things go in other countries, mightier and richer than ours, when great misery drives people to despair. Once I witnessed a riot in London, caused by famine. Thirty-four bakeries were plundered, and about two hundred persons killed or wounded. In 1683, I saw a similar scene in Carthagenia, in Spain. People cried for bread, and set fire to the governor's mansion; and after the greater part of the city had been plundered, order was restored by means of cannon. The same year, and from the same cause, there were three weeks of bloodshed in Palermo. Shortly afterwards, I had the misfortune to witness similar scenes in Cologne; the militia was kept under arms, blood flowed in torrents, and one entire quarter of the city was burned down. In the spring of 1693, several thousand soldiers were under arms night and day in Paris, to check an outbreak of popular despair; and yet scarcely a day passed without murders, incendiarisms, and fierce and bloody quarrels in which

more than a thousand persons lost their lives. Mark well how all these great cities depended upon armed force for their defense against the popular distress. And here, what have you to protect you against a population of several hundred, even thousands, streaming hither, dying with hunger before your eyes? Three invalids, and a barred wooden door which the first firebrand would kindle. But these beggars, brought to the utmost need, content themselves with hunting dogs on your streets. They die before your windows, and not a hand is lifted against your doors! A traveller, like me, can drive two hundred miles through a despairing country; and not a pistol have I needed to raise in my defense. What could have hindered these crowds which constantly surrounded me on the roads, and which, already half-dead, had made up their reckoning with life, from plundering or killing me without rescue, hundreds against one, as they often were? But they did not. There, here, everywhere, even in the hour of their utmost need, when all human duties seem to yield before the first of all natural instincts—the right of self-preservation,—then these people were still held back by the bonds of social order, by the fixed preponderance of the moral feeling; and a distress which anywhere in Europe would have brought upon the land violence, murder, and incendiarism, here only stretches out a begging hand, or stands before a barred door, or sinks to the ground, often without a complaining sound, and dies! By heavens! it is grand, it is admirable; and were our nation as great in action as it is heroic in suffering, it would not have its equal upon earth!"

"You are right," said Larsson, with emotion. "Forgive the expressions of discouragement which the sight of so much misery wrung from me. You will understand that I am a man of the people, and you are a high-born nobleman, and therefore it goes to my heart to hear you speak so well of the poor common people.

I can only answer, God protect the land and the king!"

"Yes, God protect them!" said the count. "When better times dawn, this will be to us a proof of what both are capable. It is your principle, Larsson, that there shall be a people and a king, and nothing between them. Well, I will not now dispute it. But if we acknowledge the greatness of the people, let us also recognize that of the king. That a voluntary obedience to the law, so great and so admirable as the one shown in this time of misery, has been possible, we have to thank, next to God and the people themselves, the firm and law-abiding social order which Sweden's kings have given us, and first of all the kings of the Vasa dynasty. Eternal glory for this gift from Gustaf Vasa's race! For what Finland is, it has in a great measure to thank this dynasty, whose peaceful memories live longer than its victories. Do you believe that this debt of gratitude can ever be forgotten?"

"Never," answered Larsson.

"But to the point," continued the count. "You already guess my errand, I suppose? I have come here to buy grain from you."

"I thought so," answered Larsson, uneasily.

"And that you may not wonder at it, I must tell you that I came to Majniemi on a matter of considerable importance,—in short, the estate is to be restored to the crown, but an inspection is first to take place. You know how these inspections are carried on; I must myself be present, if I would not see all that my father and I have spent on the estate entirely lost. But there reigned a more powerful authority than even the royal mandate. Hunger was king; want was chief executive. I need not describe to you the sorrowful scene. Half of my dependants had already perished from hunger. The remainder found nourishment only in the fish they succeeded in catching from the ice-covered sea. Nowhere, not even in Åbo, was grain for sale,

not for its weight in gold. Then I said to my steward: 'Our only hope is East Bothnia; go there; the Larssons are honest men; just because we have been enemies, they will help us; and even if it should cost me the little that I still possess, I will not permit Majniemi's last memory of the Bertelsköld family to be that its former master let his people die of hunger.'"

"I understand; the steward dared not," remarked Larsson.

"No, he dared not. He said to me: 'You do not know the wide extent of the suffering; if I got grain in Vasa or Storkyro, I should never be able to transport it hither. We cannot show bread to thousands who are almost dying of hunger, and ask them to allow a load of grain to pass in peace.' 'Well,' I said, 'I will go with you; and we must find some means to prevent the beggars on the road suspecting what we carry with us.' And now I am here, Father Larsson; can you and will you sell me grain, at any price whatever?"

"I cannot," answered the merchant. "I have only what we ourselves will need before midsummer."

"Then you must direct me to some one else," said Bertelsköld. "You cannot possibly let me make this long troublesome journey in vain."

Larsson was silent. But young Maja, who, with special good-will, had treated the pleasant steward to everything the house could offer, said boldly:

"Uncle in Storkyro has enough, if he will sell."

It was not the fashion at that time for children to speak in the presence of their parents, unless addressed. The father had a severe rebuke on his lips, when the mother, captivated by the politeness and cordiality of the fine nobleman, took his and her daughter's part. "Could not Lasse go with the count to Bertila?" she said, humbly. Lasse was the son.

"Perhaps, for the count's sake," replied Larsson, hesitatingly. "But it is not worth while to reckon too surely upon Bertila."

"Nothing else remains," said the count. "If you will permit, we will start immediately."

The host proposed, for appearance sake, that the count should rest over one day. He was, however, no doubt relieved to find the invitation was not accepted. But the female members of the family were reluctant to see the departure of the strangers, and provided for them a lunch-basket which at that time could be called princely.

The same evening, at about seven o'clock, the travellers drove into the farm-yard of Bertila in Storkyro. During the sixty years which have passed since we last were there, things have changed considerably for the better. The dwelling-house was still the same, in which the peasant-king, Aaron Bertila, once ruled; but a whole row of out-buildings and storehouses had risen beside it; forest and wilderness had retreated far into the background, forming a dark line upon the horizon; and the whole fertile tract, as far as the eye could reach, belonged to the place, testifying that Bertila farm was the most fruitful in the most fruitful parish in Finland. Bertila too had lost much by the Reduction; it had deprived him of several subject farms given to Aaron Bertila by Charles IX for services rendered in the Club War, and the forest commissioners had made a rigid inquiry into possible encroachments upon the forests of the crown. But fortunately these losses had not fallen upon the choicest parts of the farm, and it was therefore still looked upon as one of the richest in the parish.

It was not without emotion, mingled with curiosity, that Count Bertelsköld for the first time entered this house, the home of his father's childhood. The master, Lars Bertila (for according to the custom of the country he was named after the farm), had just sat down to the evening meal with his numerous family—his wife, four full-grown sons, three daughters, six laborers, and four servant girls. All these twelve men

and eight women, together with four poor dependents, twenty-four persons in all, went daily during the hardest time of the famine to a well-furnished board, with pure rye bread, fresh butter, salt fish, and mush—the latter being a delicacy almost unequalled at that time in Finland.

Count Bertelsköld had ample time to wonder at this unusual sight, for nobody moved at his entrance. The youngest daughter, ten years old, was just saying grace, which all silently repeated standing, with a devoutness strongly urged by the times. When the prayer was ended and all had taken seats, the host stepped forward to welcome his high-born guest, while his people unconcernedly began their meal. It could easily be seen that there was still a democratic spirit at Bertila farm; these well-to-do and independent peasants bowed neither to rank nor birth.

Even if the power of daily habits and human weakness rendered the count's pride sensitive to this reception, this impression gradually disappeared when he first began to understand the persons around him. Neither in Southern Sweden nor in Southern Finland, where the peasantry were directly or indirectly under the influence of the great estates of the nobility, had the count learned to know this independence which is characteristic of the peasants of East Bothnia, who have owned their farms since the oldest times, and where very few noblemen's estates of any importance are now found. The count began to see that Aaron Bertila's old principle of a king and a people without a nobility was something more than a mere individual whim; he began to realize that this principle was peculiarly suited to the entire temperament, habits, and views, of these regions.

Concealing under a light jest, an embarrassment unusual to him, Bertelsköld heartily shook his host's hand and said: "Good evening, Father Bertila. You see me here like a fish upon dry land; for I have

heard it said that crabs and noblemen do not thrive in East Bothnia. But it is a pleasant sight you offer me, at my first entrance. I congratulate you that the good Lord has blessed your house more than most others in this time, and I hope that you may always have the happiness of providing for so many worthy folks."

The count took good care not to allude to the matter of his father's home; for this farm would have belonged to him if the old peasant king had not disinherited his grandson, Gustaf Bertelsköld. Perhaps it was the remembrance of this, mixed with reminiscences of the contests in the assembly, which made Lars Bertila, an active and worthy old man of about sixty years, still more embarrassed than his guest. He greeted the count politely, but somewhat coldly, and with few words. Without much ceremony, a place was made at the upper end of the table, and while the others continued their meal undisturbed, the count began his at his hostess' side. His unaffected manners, his great knowledge of men, and his ability to converse with equal freedom with all classes of society, gradually won the hearts of these people, especially the women. Sons and daughters were introduced to him; they asked for news about the king; the hard times were discussed; but the count did not reveal the real object of his visit, for the cloud resting on his host's brow seemed rather to foretell denial than consent. After the meal, evening prayers were said, and all retired to rest. Beyond the large room there were only two chambers, the same that were formerly occupied one by Aaron Bertila, the other by his daughter Emerentia. This last chamber, where host and hostess usually slept, was now prepared for the stranger guest; and Bernhard Bertelsköld thus spent the night in the chamber of his gentle and unhappy grandmother, perhaps in the same bed where she had once resposed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VETERAN FROM BREITENFELD.

COUNT BERTELSKÖLD had in passing only been able to cast a glance at Korsholm, where his mother had been imprisoned. The chamber where he now rested, and which, according to his father's description, must have been his grandmother's, stirred his imagination. With its memories were mingled all the tales of the two hostile forces which contended for the fate of his family. He who once occupied the adjoining room had flung a grandfather's curse over the Bertelsköld name from generation to generation. She who once occupied this chamber had raised as a protecting shield a mother's blessing. And dimly interwoven with these half-waking visions of the night was the legendary and mysterious tradition of the king's ring. It seemed to the count as though a black hand stretched itself toward him in the darkness, and gave him back the lost ring. Eagerly he snatched after his treasure; but at that moment there sounded through the night his grandmother's sad and warning voice: "Take it not back, take it not back!" And the black hand with the ring disappeared, and all again was still — only a distant sigh died away into the night.

At last weariness prevailed, and the count fell into a deep and refreshing sleep. The early sun of the spring morning shone in through the little window and shimmered over his face, beautiful in spite of years; perhaps it was his grandmother's spirit that looked down upon him with such motherly tenderness and such radiant brightness. It was not her son, it was

her grandson, who had inherited her gentleness of heart.

Shortly after, Bertelsköld was awakened by a song in the room adjoining. It was the tremulous voice of an old man, singing a Swedish psalm—not one of the new ones which Spegel and other strong-souled men had composed for the newly-issued hymn-book, but one of Luther's old psalms, which had already lived through five or six generations. An involuntary tremor ran through Bertelsköld. He was still under the influence of his impressions of the night and the chamber; he had in his dreams heard the gentle voice of his grandmother, and now he seemed to hear the voice of the old iron-hard peasant-king in the adjoining room.

The next moment, the count smiled at his fancy, dressed himself with that care which he never neglected, and entered the main room. All were already assembled for morning prayers, which were repeated by the master, and were preceded and followed by a hymn, in which all joined. No one was disturbed by the entrance of the count.

But at the upper end of the table there now stood, not the master, but a small and bent old man, with snow-white hair, leaning with his left hand upon a cane, and wrapped in a thick sheep-skin coat, although the room was warm. Bertelsköld's eyes followed the old man with an interest which perhaps was a result of his recent phantasy, when he heard the psalm. For a moment he was tempted to ask if old Aaron Bertila still occupied his seat of honor; but Aaron was said to be a giant in both body and soul, while the little old man who stood there looked good-natured and somewhat broken, as though in his second childhood.

Master Bertila seemed to divine the count's curiosity. After prayers, and a polite inquiry as to how the count had slept, he led his guest to the old man, and said:

"Try, father, if you can guess who this gentleman is."

The old man closed one eye, which was no longer serviceable, and surveyed the count with childish curiosity.

"Don't know, don't know," he said, shaking his head. "Have seen many fine gentlemen in my days, and had honest tussles with them; but the boys of to-day have outgrown me . . . . A sturdy fellow, six feet and three inches as sure as one. I thought that kind were scarce, for men now-a-days are mere rubbish, not worth an old stirrup . . . . except you, Lasse, you and your brother. Who is this gentleman?"

"Is this really your father—my father's old brother-in-arms?" whispered the count, with visible surprise.

"The same," answered Bertila, in the same tone. "Be charitable toward the infirmity of age; God only knows how we would look, if we were to live to be ninety-nine."

"Ninety-nine!" repeated Bertelsköld.

"Yes, and eight months in the bargain. Father is not so infirm that he cannot reach a full hundred years, if the Lord wills."

"But," said Bertelsköld, as he pressed with emotion the old man's left hand (his whole right arm was withered in consequence of old wounds), "is there nothing about me which reminds you of your youth—some resemblance to persons who once shared both good and evil days with you?"

The old man held his hand over his eyes. "I see enough," he said, "to show me that there is good blood in the fair-spoken gentleman; but they are not the blue eyes of the Horns, nor the broad forehead of the Flemings, nor the eagle nose of the Vredars, nor the bear-paws of Stålhandske, nor the thin lips of the Wittenbergs;—the Croats may ride me, but he is neither Swedish nor Finnish, but German, of Bavarian race, some little nun — God forgive an old dragoon, I am

getting so far into old times that . . . . *blitzdonnerpapp* . . . . there is one whom I know by the noble underlip and by that deep dark mark above the eyes; and it was the most beautiful woman our Lord ever created —next to your mother, Lasse . . . . But who is this gentleman?"

"Bernhard Bertelsköld, son of Gustaf Bertelsköld, your old brother-in-arms!"

"Bertel—sköld . . . . sköld?" repeated the old man. "Well, well, Bertelsköld? Bertel's son, are you? And no more like your father than a Hungarian colt is like a Holsteinish mare. But it is all the same; come, let me embrace Bertel's son; you are a good two inches taller than your father, boy! Yes, yes, I have carried little Bertel in my arms, and we have more than once beaten the Croats black and blue. Where would you have been, my fine fellow, if I had not come just at the right time, when the Bavarian peasants were going to roast your father alive? Damn them! I had the doors closed, and then. . . . . But we had jollier adventures, my son! Do you remember that Christmas night in Würtzburg, when we shut that scoundrel of a Jesuit in his own treasure-room, and when you got me to drink ink, and I said masses in Latin for the monks, and we rode away with the girl right under their noses? Yes, my good fellow, confess that you took some long strides that time across the castle-yard! And, *blitzdonner!* at Lützen, when you got that rap from Pappenheim's sword across your left temple, and those brutes dragged me off my horse and drank all my wine! . . . . God bless the king!—such a king will never again draw sword from belt . . . . and . . . . but why have you not let me hear from you for so long, my little chap? Love freaks; yes, yes, youth riots, and age laments. . . . Lasse, give me my bowl of buttermilk."

At once enlivened and fatigued by his recollections, the little old man sank down upon the bench to catch

his breath, while his son handed him his favorite drink.

"You forget, dear father," said he, "that General Bertelsköld died forty years ago, and that this is his son, Count Bernhard; and he is a child no longer."

"General Bertelsköld? Count Bernhard?" repeated the old man, mechanically. "Just so. I don't know those gentlemen. But I mind me of one evening here in the room . . . . when Aaron gave us the farm. . . . . Sir, if you are Bertel's son, then you must know that I offered to give the farm back to your father when the peasant-king closed his eyes, since it grieved my heart to take from my old comrade his rightful inheritance; but he sent back word by Nils Kristerson, the nimble sergeant, who could tell lies enough in a single evening to fill seven houses, that he had taken seven or eight princely domains in Germany on his own account, and that I was welcome to keep that molehill in Storkyro. . . . Well, if that is so, said I, then I will keep it . . . ."

"Will you have the goodness to show me my grandmother's grave?" said the count, interrupting him, and anxious to avoid the delicate subject which had already caused a cloud to appear on the master's brow.

"I will myself go with you, sir count," answered Bertila, glad of a timely escape from the old man's chatter. "But it is nearly two miles there, and while the horses are harnessed, we trust you will join us in our peasant meal."

Already the warm porridge smoked upon the table, and the count ate heartily, now and then exchanging a few words with old Larsson, who had been carried so far away into the past that he forgot everything else around him, even the stern piety which was demanded in this house, and which for many years had driven away the former frivolous thoughts in the old dragoon's mind. So strong is the power of memory, especially at that age which lives only in the past, that good or evil

of a later time, however carefully instilled, yields to it, and the old warrior, transported, stretches out his withered arm,—his crutch becomes a sword, his hour-glass foams with the must of former goblets.

Storkyro church was built in the year 1304. At the time of our story, it stood, like a venerable monument of past times, on the fertile plain near Kyro river. The centuries seemed to have glided insensibly down its steep roof; the past seemed to peep out through the small windows, where many colored panes still remained from Catholic times.

Around it the garden of the dead was placed. The most prominent were buried under the floor of the church. But the peasant-king had renounced this privilege for himself and his family. Proud in life, he was humble in death. In the northwestern corner of the church-yard he had chosen a retired spot, surrounded by a hedge. A plain stone, with the letters A. B. and the date 1638, was his only monument. To the right of this was a stone with the single letter E., for his daughter Emerentia, the grandmother of Bertelsköld; to the left, a third stone, with the letters L. L., marked the resting-place of the first Larsson. A large pine, fifty years old, spread its thick branches over these hearts which once beat so warmly in the battle of life, and now beat no more.

Bertelsköld knelt and kissed the mossy stone over his grandmother's grave. Then both men stood a long time in silence. The count took out his note-book and made a sketch of the place, so that his children, he said, should never forget that they descended from the daughter of a peasant.

Now Bertelsköld revealed the object of his journey, spoke of Majniemi's need, and expressed a wish to buy grain, at whatever price. Bertila was silent. As they were leaving the church-yard, still half-covered with snow, Bertila pointed to some dark object not far from the church door. Bertelsköld shuddered. It was

a woman, who pressed two dead children to her stiffened form—all three perished from hunger on the steps of the temple of grace and mercy.

"Now you see yourself, if I can, if I ought, to give you a part of what is left," said Bertila.

This argument was striking. Bertelsköld made no reply. In gloomy silence, both returned to the farm.

But here they met an unexpected sight. The largest granary was opened. The men were busy loading six wagons with sacks of rye, which they very carefully covered with old linen, to give them the appearance of loads of rags, such as were sometimes transported from there to Åbo, and thence to Stockholm—for at that time not a single paper-mill was to be found in Finland.

"Who has dared do this?" cried Lars Bertila, beside himself with anger at the sight.

"I have, Lasse," answered the little centenarian, hobbling forward, so gray with dust that he might have been taken for a granary rat, or at least a goblin guarding the treasures of the storehouse. "Yes, I have done it," he repeated; "the count's steward told me how things were. What do six loads of rye matter to you, little Lasse? Do you really wish my friend Bertel's son to come here and return with empty hands?"

"Can we afford to feed people from other parishes, when our own folks are dying from hunger?" replied Bertila, who whispered a few words into the ear of one of the men.

The little old man seemed suddenly restored to youth. "Indeed," he said, stepping nearer his son, "you intend to disobey your father, boy! *Blitzdonner!* you are an ungrateful villain, and haven't two cents' worth of back-bone in you. Remember that all you possess, and all we see here, should have been Bertel's lawful inheritance from his mother and would now have belonged to Bertel's son, as inherited from his father, if old Aaron had not given it to us. And now

the same Bertel's son comes here to buy grain from you for hard silver money, while his estate is ravished by hunger—and you do not blush, stupid boy, to talk of people from other parishes, and refuse to sell what you ought to have offered without payment! Fie, Lasse, I blush for you; you were never a soldier; you are a mole, burrowing in the earth, that does not understand how to live and let live, like an honest cavalier. Go in now, and don't grumble; I will attend to this matter."

"Father is crazy from weakness and age," muttered the "boy" of sixty years; yet so great was his reverence for his father, that he made no more objections, but followed the count into the house and let the loading go on. Early in the forenoon, the wagons were ready. Bertelsköld offered in payment twenty dollars a barrel, and asked if Bertila wanted more.

"No," said he, "I have said I don't sell grain; but I will give it to you."

"And I receive no gifts," the count answered, proudly. "Here is the money."

The rich peasant was not insensible to the sight of shining silver. But he persistently refused. At last they agreed that the amount should go to the poor of Storkyro parish.

Bertelsköld took dinner in the home of his father's childhood. Then he changed his dress, disguising himself as a peasant, and started, with his steward, Master Pehr, and some hired men, who all were to try to pass for people conveying rags to Åbo. The leave-taking at the farm was civil, if not hearty. The last one who shook the count's hand was the old dragoon.

"Farewell, Bertel's son," he said. "When you go, I seem to see a whole century go with you. *Blitzdonnerkreutz-pappenheim!* now it is time for the old saddle-worn dragoon to go and seek his comrades on Breitenfeld's plains and in Lützen's ditches. God save the king and the fatherland. Hurrah!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MAJNIEMI CASTLE.

COUNT BERTELSKÖLD'S journey across the country, with the six loads of grain, was, as the steward had anticipated, not without dangers; if the starving crowds which the travellers everywhere encountered had suspected what was hidden under the rags, the temptation would probably have proved too strong. The greatest prudence had to be observed, and they dared not stop in any place where considerable numbers of people were around. Only at solitary farms they sometimes dared to rest. And so the journey went on successfully, in spite of the many difficulties.

Although the count did his best to hasten their speed, it was impossible for him to reach Majniemi before the afternoon of the fourteenth of March—the day when the estate was to be given up. The few hours' delay beyond the appointed time cost him dearly. At the time of his departure, he did not know who was to be the commissioner, that, together with the judge of the district, was in behalf of the crown to take possession of the estate, survey and value it, and in general protect the interests of the crown. To his dismay, he now heard the individual's name. On the road, at some distance from the castle, he was met by a ragged, wretched, half-starved person, in whom he with difficulty recognized Lampi-Maths, the same who from his very childhood had nurtured such an inextinguishable hatred toward the oppressors of the peasantry.

"You come just in time, your grace, to see Nils Janssen ransack your property," cried the man to him.

"If you wish, I will return with you and crush the raven dead in the midst of his plunderings!"

"Nils Janssen!" exclaimed the count.

"Yes, he is the commissioner of the crown," answered the Lampi-man. "Your grace may be sure that he performs his duties thoroughly. I never yet saw an executioner so delighted. He rubs his hands from very joy; he seems able to eat all Majniemi, with Lampi and Arvio villages, like steak and cucumbers. He is crowding matters; the inspection of the castle has already been made, and now they are taking the villages."

The man was right. A dark and malign influence had settled upon the splendor of the castle. Nothing was disarranged, very few things were moved; apparently everything was unchanged; but a Cain-mark of chalk was seen upon all objects, proving that they had all been valued in the greatest haste. The count took a rapid survey of the enemy's proceedings; when he came to the large armory hall, he stopped, in amazement, anger, and mortification; across his father's full-length picture, and across the Bertelsköld escutcheon beneath, there was written, in large letters: *Fifteen dollars silver.*

We have more than once seen that Count Bertelsköld had inherited a violent and fiery temper, although usually able to govern it in good time. But on this occasion he was so incensed at the conduct of his former servant that he went beyond the boundaries of prudence.

He caused all chalk-marks to be erased from his goods, and awaited with apparent calmness the return of Nils Janssen from the inspection of the villages. The latter did not arrive until toward evening; he entered boldly, followed by the judge of the district, with the warrant of Åbo court. The count received him sitting in the so-called green hall on the first floor. Either from the force of habit, or the respect which

the proud nobleman's composure inevitably inspired, Janssen stopped at the door and for a moment hesitated. Without honoring him with a glance, the count turned to the judge and remarked that the inspection in his absence was illegal, as the law of procedure provided that if either party fails to appear at the inspection, the judge shall fix another day, on which the inspection must proceed, if no lawful hindrance occurs.

Janssen hastened to reply that Majniemi, since March of the previous year, had been sentenced to revert to the crown as freed from mortgage, and that since his royal majesty had granted a respite of an entire year, no further delay should be considered.

The judge confirmed this. The count remarked further, still addressing the judge, that inspection of real estate must according to law take place between Rogation-week and All-saints-day, or at least when the ground was bare, and consequently not now, when the ground was partly covered with snow. Janssen objected that the same considerations applied to this as to the first remark of the count, and that, furthermore, the count had not complained, though he had got notice of the time set for the inspection. This the judge confirmed as before.

The count finally remarked that since his royal majesty had remitted the crown's pretended claim to the income of the estate, and that, in yielding possession of the landed property, he had full title, without any deduction or farther debt, to all personal property upon it, as well as to the buildings which his late father had erected and he himself had enlarged, all surveys and appraisals of anything but the soil and necessary outbuildings were unauthorized and would not be permitted by him ; yes, he would even demand damages for the entrance of his house in his absence, and for the marks which had been placed, in an entirely unjustifiable manner, upon objects with which the crown had nothing whatever to do.

Janssen had undoubtedly expected this, for he drew forth, with ill-concealed malignity, a newly-added supplement to the court warrant, in which it was set forth that the forests of the estate had decreased, since 1644, to half their size . . . .

"But this," the count interrupted violently, "has been done almost entirely to gain soil for tillage; and it ought to be reckoned in my favor that the cultivated ground of the estate has been almost doubled since that year."

"And furthermore," continued the inexorable executor, "considerable area has been fenced in for a hunting park, without any benefit to the property; and a number of other acts of negligence, specified herein, have been discovered, which must all be considered as misuse of mortgaged property, with a resulting obligation of reparation; wherefore it would depend upon the decision of the royal court whether the present occupant of Majniemi ought not to compensate the crown in a very considerable amount, for misuse of its estate. And therefore the executor, with the judge's approval, has thought it advisable for the present, and until these matters could be investigated, to sequester the present movables of the count, and to appraise them, all under reservation of the due approval of the court. . . . . And," added Janssen, sneeringly, "as a consequence hereof, the count will think it reasonable that, to secure the rights of the high crown, all rooms in the castle should be immediately closed and sealed, although the commissioner of the crown would not prohibit the servants of the castle from occupying their quarters for the present, or the count from remaining with them if it so pleased him; . . . . nor would the executor prevent the count from taking with him from the castle any necessary clothing, bedding, and linen, together with provisions, which, however, must all take place in the presence of the officials."

If it was really Janssen's intention to bend the bow

so tightly that it must break, he reached his end. As soon as he had finished, Bertelsköld pulled a bell. Master Pehr entered, and in the door behind him appeared Lampi-Maths.

"Throw that impudent fellow down-stairs and kick him outside the gate!" was the count's brief command.

It was done immediately, notwithstanding the protests of Janssen and the judge, "in the name of the high crown." It is also said that Lampi-Maths bestowed upon the royal commissioner a hearty thrashing on his own account.

Such remnants of feudal resistance to the authority of the crown were punished in the reign of Charles XI with the greatest severity. The governor in Åbo had strict instructions in this respect; and before noon of the following day a detachment of fifty soldiers stood outside the gates of Majniemi castle, on the requisition of Janssen to enforce proper obedience to the executive power.

It is possible that Count Bertelsköld repented his hasty course. But rather than submit to the audacity of his former servant, he resolved to venture to the utmost. He armed his men, twelve or fifteen in number and thoroughly devoted to him, and sent out a parleyer with the message that he would surrender the castle only on the condition that nobody should be permitted to touch his private movable property, with which the crown, according to law and justice, had nothing to do. The answer was that the count must surrender unconditionally.

The castle could not well be called a fortress, especially as the garden, surrounded only by a low wall, reached below the windows of the side facing the sea. But in the windows the count placed sharpshooters under the command of Master Pehr, while the main force defended the castle-yard, surrounded on three sides by stone buildings, and on the fourth by a high wall, with a main gate, and two smaller entrances, one

on each side. The besieging force was three times as large as that of the defenders, but this superiority was somewhat counterbalanced by a fear of the peasantry in Lampi and Arvio villages, which belonged to the estate, and where the count was highly beloved, especially since he had brought grain to relieve the severe famine. The greatest part of this grain he had distributed the night before, without payment, in both places. Scarcely had the soldiers arrived, before a young boy, sent by the villagers, stole in through the garden and brought the count a message that forty men, armed with axes and scythes, were ready to attack the soldiers in the rear if they tried to storm the castle.

To this message Bertelsköld answered as might have been expected from his noble habit of mind. The peasants were sternly exhorted to remain quietly in their houses, and not to bring misfortune upon themselves to no purpose. This conflict did not concern the estate, for it now belonged to the crown beyond dispute; it concerned only the person of the count, who ought not to be dishonored, contrary to law and justice, by the sequestering of his property, as it was not proved that he was in any way indebted to the crown. With this answer, the messenger was sent back. But Bertelsköld took the precaution to avail himself of the opportunity to write to the governor in Åbo, Baron Creutz, and to explain, as well as time permitted, the cause of the strife, and to ask his intercession to avoid bloodshed.

Nils Janssen, on his side, saw all his schemes succeed, one after another; it was now only necessary to precipitate some act of violence to force the count into an attitude of armed resistance to the authority of the crown, and thus make him guilty of a capital crime. For this purpose, he ordered as many ladders as possible to be gathered, and while some of his men made a feigned attack upon the main gate, the principal force was sent through the garden in order to reach

the windows of the lower story by means of the ladders, break the shutters, which were only of wood, and thus enter the castle.

But Count Bertelsköld, who during his eventful life had suffered many a siege worse than this, saw through the enemy's plan, and resolved to prevent it, if possible without bloodshed. A few years before he had brought home from Holland an invention new at that time—three large fire-engines, for the use of the castle. These he had placed in the third story, and furnished them abundantly with ice-cold water from the wells of the castle. The little garrison was arranged so that only three men guarded the yard, and these were ordered to exchange loose shots with the assailants, while the main force, aided by the female inmates of the castle, were placed partly at the engines and partly in the windows of the second and third floors, which had no shutters.

It was six o'clock in the evening before the besiegers were ready to attack. Janssen read, without effect, the proper sections of the criminal code: "Whoever shall incite and aid the common people to disobedience against the king or the one who commands and rules in behalf of the government, shall lose his life. If rebellion results, he shall lose both life and property. If people collect together and resist the king or the commands of his officers, the instigator shall be punished as before said, and of the others, every tenth man according to lot shall lose his life, and the rest shall be punished with forty lashes each, or a month's imprisonment on bread and water," etc. Then the belligerents were once more exhorted to surrender without conditions.

As no answer followed, the assault commenced. The detachment in front of the gate made a great noise, yelled, and fired into the air; while the three men of the castle's garrison, under the command of Daniel, tried by similar demonstrations to conceal the

weakness of their number. At a given signal the main force rushed into the garden, placed the ladders in position, and prepared for hewing down the shutters. But during this work, misfortune came over them in the shape of ice-cold showers, as if falling from the sky. The engines did their work admirably. Their streams, directed downward, were so strong that they swept man after man from the ladders, and, wet to the skin, swearing and humiliated, the assailants one by one stole away.

The whole formidable siege had very nearly ended in laughter and ridicule. Various polite little jokes were heard from the victorious garrison, especially its female portion. "More broth, more broth for the crown's minions! No one shall go thirsting from Majniemi! Good-for-nothings as you are! pigmies! pagans! have you now been baptized? Look, comrade, and see if you are dry behind the ears! Grunt if you like! Thrust in the spit, turnip-peelers, or stick yourselves on the spit, washed clean as you are, starved-out crown-beasts! You thought the way into Majniemi was as easy as to the girls' garret on Saturday nights!"

With such words and compliments, they believed they had got rid of the retreating enemy. But Nils Janssen was not the man to stop at any half-way work.

"And you will bear that, will you?" he whispered to a soldier, who with an oath had retired behind an old oak. "You are milksops, and not brave fellows, if you allow every fool to drive you. Do you see that fellow in the second-story window? He is the one who . . . . "

The soldier, wet and irritated, needed no more than a half-spoken word. In a twinkling he had seized his gun, steadied it against the oak, aimed, and fired. The shot struck Lampi-Maths in the shoulder.

"Is anyone wounded?" cried Count Bertelsköld,

who recognized the well-known music of a whistling bullet.

"No," answered Lampi-Maths, grinding his teeth. "Nils Janssen has sent a pea against the window; he shall have a bean back."

"By your life—no lead in the barrel!" commanded the count.

"Lead!" replied the man, grinning with pain. "Has not your grace been so kind as to give us salt?" The count had indeed given them powder and guns, but only coarse salt instead of balls and shot. But Lampi-Maths was too old a hunter not to be better equipped, and had smuggled, unnoticed, two bullets into his gun.

"Well, frighten him, then, if you wish!"

"It shall be done, your grace!" Puff! and at the shot there fell, not Janssen, but the soldier who at that moment leaned forward in front of the former head-steward.

"Wretch! what have you done?" exclaimed Bertelsköld.

"Missed, your grace! I aimed at a raven and hit a cuckoo. Why should I try to do the work ef the devil? Everything black he will keep for his own reckoning," and with these words the man walked off to dress his wounded shoulder with an old apron. Anxious about results, Bertelsköld had the most excited of his men disarmed, and sent to inquire the effects of the shot. The answer was that the soldier had been shot through the breast and probably had not many hours to live. No sleep came that night to Bertelsköld.

Janssen meanhile had obtained his object. After securing witnesses to the fact that the soldier had been shot from one of the castle windows, he retreated with his men, without any further attacks, and took quarters for the night at the parsonage.

In the forenoon of the next day, the governor, Baron Creutz, arrived at the place, and made full in-

quiries into what had happened. The soldier still lived. Bertelsköld immediately ordered the castle-gates to be opened.

"Baron," he said in French, "you are a nobleman of honor ; without fear, I place my case in your hands. A trial will prove that the first shot was fired by the soldiers."

"I feel sincerely for you, count," replied Baron Creutz, in the same language. "Whatever the law can do will be done ; but,"—here the veteran lowered his voice,—"you know as well as I, that an autocratic king never *can* be wrong. In a matter of so much delicacy as a Reduction question, I fear that the one who has dared to resist the executive authorities must draw the shortest straw. The case involves much more than you and I and even the law itself ; I am sorry, but the principle which now rules is involved ;—and you are accused of rebellion, count ! I shall be obliged to arrest you and all your servants."

"I obey you," answered Bertelsköld. "Here is my sword. I surrender it unstained, and I leave it in the noblest hands to which under the circumstances I could hope to surrender it."

The consternation at Majniemi can be imagined. The castle was given into the custody of Nils Janssen ; yet certain rooms, in accordance with the wishes of the count, were closed and sealed with the seal of the governor. Bertelsköld was permitted to take with him everything he wished. All male servants who had taken part in the defense of the castle, Master Pehr not excepted, were collected together, to be taken to Åbo castle, yet without fetters and bonds.

While this was taking place, Janssen approached his former master, bowing with a feigned humility which, at such a moment, expressed the bitterest corn.

"Your grace," he whispered, "you now see that your humble servant is a man who keeps his word. I have made you a beggar now I disgrace you, and

conduct you, my gracious count, as near the scaffold as such a fine and high-born lord can go. Be calm ; I have provided for your good ; I shall also take care of your family. Do you remember the night when you so politely demanded the bundle of receipts which your gracious countess had been kind enough to give the 'lackey,' as you were pleased to express yourself ? Your triumph was not as perfect as you believed, your grace. There remained still a small and very insignificant piece of paper, which is quite sufficient to lay open certain domestic and family matters, and to let others be suspected—in regard to that 'filthy heart,' you remember. Look here ; read yourself—it is the handwriting of the countess, is it not ?"

And Janssen held before Bertelsköld's eyes a small piece of paper, on which was written :

"Janssen is entitled to four hundred dollars in silver. Received. [Signed.] Ebba Christina Bertelsköld, born Sparre."

"Scoundrel ! what do you intend to do ?" said the count, greatly excited.

"Sue the countess, of course. Then it will be your children's turn ! . . . . O my mother, you shall be revenged to the third and fourth generation !" added the man, in a changed tone, so sharp and sinister that an involuntary shudder ran through Bertelsköld's frame.

"And this devil has the king's ring !" exclaimed the unhappy count, unable to free himself from the superstition of the time.

"You know it, then ?" said Janssen, in a low voice. "Well, then you know my power. Ah, Count Bertelsköld, do you believe in what men call providence ?—or, if you choose, fate or chance ? Would you like to learn how strangely the seed of retaliation falls in the track of misdeed ? Five years old, I was sitting, weeping, hidden in the corner of a Jutlandish peasant cabin, the same evening your father had stolen me from my

mother. They had given me a piece of wheat bread; at that price they would buy from me the memory of the past. . . . . I ate, for I was a child; but when I had eaten, I wept again, for my mother's shrieks still sounded in my ears. As I thus was thinking of her broken heart, a violent quarrel arose between some fine gentlemen in the cabin; two of them drew their swords and fought with all their might to destroy each other. Frightened, I hid myself still farther in the corner; I trembled, I closed my eyes; . . . . then something flew into my lap. I picked it up . . . . it was a bloody, amputated finger, and on the finger was a copper ring. Children are curious; I took off the ring, I concealed it, although I heard that it was looked for. Small as I was, I had sense enough to keep it; the memory of a fearful day was connected with it. It was a long time after, when I first learned its power. It was you, sir count, who spoke of it; I listened to you one day, when you told its history, as a romantic tale, to one of your sweethearts. Then I understood why the robber's bloody finger fell into my lap, and I felt that I had already unconsciously had proofs of the ring's power. I succeeded in everything . . . . and I shall always succeed, my gracious lord! Do you see," and Janssen showed him the ring, "this is the way it looks, this trifle upon which the fate of your family depends! You would be glad to buy it back with half your remaining life . . . . Ah, excuse me, I forgot that you are accused of rebellion against your lord and king. A pleasant journey, sir count!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE KING'S RING.

NEARLY six weeks have flitted by, and we are at the end of April, 1697. Count Bertelsköld, now a prisoner, occupied two large rooms in Åbo castle which Baron Creutz had fitted up for him, the chivalrous commander not even requiring his word of honor, although permitting the count to go and come at pleasure, within the precincts of the castle. Bertelsköld availed himself but little of this freedom. His mind was gloomy and depressed; for more than a month he had had no news of his family in Sweden, as the mail-service across Åland sea was then less perfectly regulated than now, and it was no uncommon thing in autumn or spring for four to six weeks to pass without any direct communication between Sweden and Finland.

The trial of the count and his servants had been conducted fairly in the high court, and the governor had transmitted a report of it to the king, together with a statement of all the extenuating circumstances of the case. The issue depended to some extent upon the life of the wounded soldier. His wound was rather dangerous; the man had received both bullets in his breast, and only one had been extracted. Contrary to all expectations, however, he kept up; and after hovering some time between life and death, he gradually began to mend. As a result, the case was still more protracted. For a time, some of the count's servants were imprisoned in the castle; but those less implicated were released, for a very peculiar reason: the high crown had no food to give them. Lampi-Maths,

against whom the gravest charges had been made, succeeded in escaping by flight, and was nowhere to be found.

Anxiety and sorrow at last placed Count Bertelsköld upon a sick-bed. Every day he looked through his small window out upon the castle fïord; as far as the eye could reach, the ice remained, and hope's blue rim was still far off. The tidings from the court were unfavorable; the horrors of the famine continued everywhere; the count felt himself abandoned by all the world, and the once strong man, now broken in body and mind, fell into a melancholy from which even the governor's delicate care could not raise him.

"The star of my race is setting," he sighed. "I am not sorry for myself; I am sorry for my name and for my children."

"Do not sorrow," said a mild female voice:

> 'In God have faith,
> And till thy death
> Thou shalt securely live."

The count turned around. That voice was to him dear and well known as a memory from the days of youth, long since past. At his side stood Greta, the wife of Father Johannes, of Majniemi parsonage, she whom we met at the beginning of this story. She looked upon him with her true and earnest eyes, which still, in the fresh autumn of age, had retained their lustre, and into which, against her will, a pearly tear was stealing.

"Do not sorrow!" she repeated. "The Almighty changes sorrow into a purer joy than the sinful heart was capable of before."

It seemed to Bertelsköld as if his good angel had come like a star between the dark clouds that hid the future from his eyes.

"Is it you, Greta?" he said, feebly. "Go back to your happy home; all have abandoned me, save sor-

row. Your home?—poor mother! I forget that I have perhaps robbed you of your dearest son?"

Greta tried to smile, with the same pleasant smile which once passed like sunbeams over everything around her. "Now you are wrong, sir count," she said. "There are many who love you, both in this country and beyond the sea. And if there were not, you must remember, count, what Black Jane once predicted for us, in her hut: I was to be the last who should be faithful to you, she said . . . . Jane talked foolishly sometimes; it is not worth thinking of."

"The first and the last!" replied the count, thoughtfully. "She spoke the truth; do you remember, she said also that I would one day fall, through my own acts? Now I have fallen . . . . Majniemi has fallen . . . . my race will also fall."

"You are ill; sorrowful thoughts always come then. I came here to look after my poor Pehr; but the boy is well, and keeps up his courage. My family at home are also in good health. Promise me, therefore, that I may nurse you till you have regained your health."

"Good and faithful friend! Stay, if you wish; it will not be long. My mother died of heart-disease. I recognize the inheritance from her, and it is incurable by present medical skill. The art of a future period may perhaps succeed in it."

"You must not think so much about that. I have a piece of news for you, which is not of the happiest, but which will give you something else to think of. Did you know that Nils Janssen was dead?"

"Janssen dead!" exclaimed the count, in agitation.

"Be calm, or I will tell you nothing. Yes, it happened yesterday. He made great havoc at Majniemi, acting like a perfect tyrant; and, as good-fortune often generates haughtiness and foolhardiness, the fellow commenced to drink more wine than was good for him, which he had never done before. It happened the day before yesterday, which was a Sunday; he

came drunk to the parsonage, and invited himself to dinner, since there was scarcely food for a rat in that miserable castle, he said. Father and I were obliged to keep up a good countenance. But at the table, Janssen boasted of his great luck in this world, how nobody could resist him, for he had a talisman, he said, and it made him irresistible in everything. And then he drew forth a ring, which he showed us . . . . "

"The ring! the ring!" exclaimed Bertelsköld.

"You know that father is not to be trifled with, when anyone defies God's word and glory in his presence. Unmindful of the strong man's angry glances, Johannes began to rebuke him severely for sorcery and for keeping company with the devil; and as there were many poor people coming to us, as usual, for the Sunday's food and alms, the room was presently filled with people, who listened with surprise to father's rebuking words. I think Janssen must have felt ashamed before all the people, for suddenly he changed to another key, began to laugh, and said that all he had told us of the ring was mere nonsense, and not a word of it was true, for the ring had no more power than any other piece of copper, and we were very foolish to take his words in earnest."

"Perjurer! Did he say that, Greta? Then he is lost; for it was thus it happened with . . . ." the count had intended to name his father; but filial feeling stopped his words.

"Whether this was the reason, I cannot tell," answered Greta, calmly; "but in the afternoon Janssen drove over to Jane's island, taking many men with him,—to hunt for the hidden treasure, you know. The ice was very frail, and all warned him against driving upon it; but, wild and crazy, he whipped up his horse, and then the ice broke . . . . "

"And all . . . . ?"

"No, he alone. Six fell into the water, but five of them escaped. The sixth was Janssen."

"God be praised!" exclaimed Bertelsköld, and his lightened bosom drew a deep breath.

Greta looked at him with amazement, almost with severity. "We thank God when a human being dies," she said, "but we do so because the soul is freed, and the body finds rest after the toils of this life. But it is not right to thank God for the death of an enemy. When a sinner perishes amidst his sins, it is more Christian-like to implore eternal mercy upon him."

"You are right," said the count; "it was a sinful rejoicing. But it was not for my own sake, it was for the sake of my wife and children. This man, if he had lived, would have destroyed us all; I should have gone from earth in the certainty that my dearest ones were doomed to inevitable ruin."

"And you speak thus, count, you, a Christian and a man?" said Greta, reproachfully. "Has the strong and almighty hand of God been paralyzed? You met your enemies man to man. And you, who are so chivalrous and proud, you will condescend to fear him?"

"I never feared any man," said the count, earnestly; "a hundred times I have exposed my life, and never paled. But that man's revenge rested upon us with the weight of an irreparable wrong. It is a dreadful thing to steal a child, to kill its mother by sorrow, and afterwards to have the responsibility of that child's earthly and eternal welfare, which have been lost because the child was torn untimely from its root. This my father did—although without divining the results; but the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. . . . Now you understand why I feared. Tell me," and the count firmly seized her hand, "what has become of the king's ring?"

Greta seemed embarrassed, almost frightened. "If you do not lie quietly down to rest on the bed," she said, "I will leave you at once. Is it right for a sick

person to get the blood so heated? You have fever, count; it is better we prepare a cooling medicine."

"The ring! the ring!" continued Bertelsköld. "I must know what has become of the king's ring. If it should again fall into the hands of a stranger, a new peril will arise for my family through a whole generation."

"Tell me," said Greta, with mild persuasion, "is it not unchristian and heathenish to believe in such a power in a piece of copper? You, who are so wise and so good, do you not see that such a belief denies God's power, defies His wise providence, and puts the life of man, which after all depends upon God's paternal hand, into the hands of a blind fate, without justice and without mercy?"

"Happy, pious soul! You are right; how willingly would I change with you, your firm faith for my unbelief! But you, who know what wondrous power there is in a belief, you must also know how wondrous is the power of unbelief. This witchcraft which has stained our time, did it not at last become real through the firm belief of the people in its reality? And so it is with the king's ring. The witches disappear, and the ring loses its power, when we no longer believe in them; but alas! we are the children of our century; I cannot separate myself from it; I believe in the influence of the ring, and therefore it is to me such a terrible reality. I must know where the ring is."

Greta made one more attempt to lead his thoughts from the dangerous subject. "Is it my duty to take care of your rings?" she said, with feigned vexation. "Let it suffice that I bring you something else which was found in Janssen's pockets when the sheriff took possession of his things. Here is a receipt from the countess; I fancied you might be anxious to recover it, and therefore asked my husband to deposit a corresponding amount, that it might be recovered without

further complications. God be praised that we had saved up a little money, which was just sufficient."

"That was right and good, Greta," answered the count, as he hastily tore the paper into small pieces, and then quickly wrote a few words on a leaf from his note-book. "If anything fatal should happen to me, this will give you security for your advance. But now, answer me frankly, for you must know what has become of the king's ring?"

"I have it with me," answered Greta, reluctantly, when she found it impossible to evade the question further.

"You have it? You have it here?"

"I have it here."

"Then give it to me, quick! I have no time to wait."

"Fool that I was, to come to you at all! Had it not been for your sake, I would certainly not have given my betrothal ring to the sheriff as a pawn for this miserable piece of copper. And now my reward is to see your excitement make you doubly worse. You are as pale as a white cloud."

"Look here," said the count, with the same nervous haste, as he drew from his finger a costly ring; "this is the jewel Queen Christina gave me at her departure. Take it, keep it, but give me the copper ring. I have never worn it, and I must wear it upon my hand, if only for a single moment; for its power increases from generation to generation, if it is worn uninterruptedly by father and son; more and more the power of its owner increases—until in the sixth generation he shall become a king. . . . "

"Sinful, worldly, vain desires for power and glory! Turn your thoughts elsewhere! If it were as you believe, the ring would indeed be a misfortune, as it would always keep your family entangled in worldly desires. Remember what your father became through this ring. I have heard it said that he was good and

noble in his youth, but toward the last sin mastered him. And you, yourself, who never wore this ring, you have remained good and noble, until I imprudently brought it to you ; and now, although you have it not, do not even see it, it affects you already, invisibly, so that you forget everything else for the phantom of ambition. Oh, it must be an evil phantom, since it can thus bewilder a man like you."

"You do not understand, Greta. I have not lived and struggled for my own sake, nor will my sons for theirs. We live for an idea—for harmony between king and people, between autocracy and democracy, between tyranny and anarchy, through the nobility's mediating position between them—and for that purpose we need power, great power! Do you now understand why I must have the king's ring?"

Greta's eyes filled with tears. "I am a poor unlearned woman," she said ; "I do not understand much of this world's strifes. I only understand that everything which draws the human mind away from God and the eternal to worldly and vain things, is sin and destruction from the evil one. Since I cannot move your heart in any other way, I will appeal to the time of your youth. It is now one and forty years since we met one day in Jane's cottage. You were at that time very dear to me, Count Bernhard, and you said the same to me. Do you remember that you, in the imprudence of youth, asked me, the daughter of your father's steward, to be—your wife?"

"Ah, yes! It was the happiest time of my life. And you, the poor girl, refused . . . . "

"I told you, Bernhard, that you should forget me, and I would think of you as the bird in winter thinks of the summer that is past. But you vowed that never in the world would you love anyone but me. Then we made a wager. You wished to stake Queen Christina's ring against a blue-bell which I wore in my neckerchief. 'It is too much,' I said; 'but if you

lose, give me your father's copper ring.' You promised, and Jane was to tell our fortunes, to decide the wager. Do you remember what she told you?"

"I think there were seventeen."

"Two would have been sufficient to lose your wager; and Jane said seventeen. Did she tell truly?"

"The number was too small. . . . I have not been worthy of you."

"You were young, rich, handsome, and high-born . . . . Let us speak no more of that. . . . But when you left me in anger, and declared that Jane had told sixteen lies, you said to me: 'The copper ring shall be yours!'"

"But the ring was then my father's. . . . "

"And now it is yours, Count Bernhard. A promise is sacred. And so the ring is mine, for you have lost the wager."

"Ask what you will . . . . anything but that!"

"No, sir count; I need nothing, and I ask for nothing except what justly belongs to me. The ring is mine, upon your word and honor as a man. Here it is. . . . '

And Greta drew forth a small wooden box, put a glove upon her right hand, and took the ring between her thumb and her middle finger.

"I will not," she said, "touch with my bare hand this ill-fated ring which has already produced so much evil. Yes, here is the magic spell which has been lost for almost forty years—here is the talisman on which you say your family's fate depends—here is the evil spirit of power and success which inspires human souls with haughtiness against God, and tyranny and selfishness against their brother men;—and now it is in my possession, now it is mine; and do you know what I shall now do with it . . . . ?"

"I implore you, Greta . . . . ," exclaimed the count, in such violent emotion that he could not rise from the couch.

"Yes, I will tell you what I shall do with the evil spirit," continued the brave woman, with an enthusiasm unusual to her. "Here, under the window, dash the waves of the bay. . . . I bury for all eternity the king's ring in their depths, and you and your children will bless me for what I have done."

And with these words, she resolutely knocked out a window-pane, stepped backward, and aimed to throw the ring as surely and as far as possible. Just at that moment, a black snow-cloud passed across the sun, and the room was obscured even to darkness.

"One moment! but one moment!" implored Bertelsköld, almost unable to speak.

The count's usually powerful voice was now so feeble that Greta hesitated.

"What do you still desire?" said she, trembling in spite of herself.

"I ask only . . . . five minutes' respite. Place the ring on my finger. . . . If five minutes pass . . . . and my fate does not meanwhile change, and the ring thus shows its power, ... then it belongs to you . . . . otherwise . . . . it is mine!"

"Sinful, gloomy belief!" said Greta. "And on that condition will you voluntarily return the ring?"

"I will."

"And if the five minutes pass without great changes, you promise me that you will then turn your mind from this world and never more believe in the power of the ill-fated ring?"

"I promise you."

"Well! Forgive me, dear Lord, if I sin in thus yielding, and tempt thy providence by human curiosity! Here is the ring!"

And she placed it upon the count's hand. Then she covered the broken pane, to shelter the sick man from the draught.

About a minute passed in silence. After a little, a sunbeam appeared. This simple circumstance caused

both the count and the minister's wife to tremble. But it was only for a few seconds. The sun disappeared again behind the clouds.

They could almost hear their hearts beat.

"The time is past," said Greta, at length. "Now you see how foolish was your faith. Give me the tempter, and it shall sink forever in the depths of the waves."

"One minute is still left," whispered Bertelsköld, whose eyes constantly followed the slow movement of the hands of the great clock which hung on the wall near the door.

Greta shook her head. "A straw for the last hope of earthly desires!" she said, pityingly. "One more beat of time's fluttering wings—and it too will have shared the fate of human delusions."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when steps were heard and somebody touched the door-knob. If there had been more light in the room, Greta would have seen how Bertelsköld changed color, his pale cheeks suddenly flushing deeply.

The governor, Baron Creutz, entered. His appearance in deep mourning dress indicated that something unusual had happened.

He stepped to Count Bertelsköld, and said, in a gentle and serious voice: "I come to announce to you a message of sorrow which the Swedish mail, just now arrived, has brought to Finland's coasts. His majesty, our gracious king, Charles XI, is upon earth no more. On the fifth of April, he fell asleep in the peace of the Lord; and Charles XII, our present king, has ascended the throne of Sweden. Peace to the departed. In many respects he was a true father to his country, and in spite of his human errors he will always be counted among the best kings of Sweden. God grant to his son and successor a happy reign!"

Bertelsköld bowed his head with an expression of emotion

"Next," continued the governor, "I have better news to bring you personally; Gyllenborg, your enemy, has lost his power. Our present gracious king, who, if rumor speaks the truth, is no friend of the Reduction, has ordered that the proceedings against you, my count, for rebellion, shall be entirely stopped, and that the royal commissioner Janssen shall be discharged with a severe reproof for his bad conduct, which is now superfluous, since I hear the churl is drowned. His majesty has directed me especially to express to you his royal displeasure with these events in which you were the injured party, and at the same time to recommend you, as soon as your health will permit, to present yourself in Stockholm, to occupy a seat in the council of the king and of the country."

It was so dark in the room that none noticed how Greta, who had retired behind the curtains of the bed, hid her face in her hands from terror. On Bertelsköld the news made a different impression. Instead of answering, he drew Baron Creutz nearer to him, pointed to the ring on his left hand, and whispered:

"This ring . . . . to Torsten . . . . tell him . . . . king . . . . and people . . . . through the nobil . . . ."

Perhaps the noble baron was not entirely unaccustomed to the fantasies of Bertelsköld during his sickness, for the count had always had a strong inclination to reverie. However, Baron Creutz continued, in the hope of enlivening his guest, who had now advanced in rank so far beyond him.

"Speaking of your son Torsten, your countess and your daughter are very well, as I hear from my sister; and here are letters from both your sons. Without being premature, I can perhaps venture to tell you that your son Torsten, although still so young, has for his eminent attainments been installed in the king's chancery, while the brightness of your son Gustaf advances him daily in the favor of our young monarch. *Enfin*,

what do you say to this, my noble guest? If you do not immediately get well, it is not my fault. And still I have a little dessert left, which I hope may agree with you. In consideration of the great expenses you and your father have borne in improving Majniemi Castle, it is the wish of our gracious king that during your lifetime you shall manage the estate. After your death, the property will be the residence of the commander of Åbo regiment, and thus, as his royal majesty jokingly remarked, your son Gustaf will probably be your successor.—But you do not so much as thank me! My dear count, how am I to understand that? You smile, I can see that, and it is a good sign. I wager you will be well to-morrow; we shall go hunting together; the bear will have to look out for his pelt; how happy I am to find such an experienced hunting comrade! . . . Uncommonly dark it is for a spring day. . . . Ah, now the sun comes out. . . . But . . . . "

As if a thick black veil had suddenly fallen from the brow of nature, the sun broke forth in all his splendor and flung his shimmering radiance through the windows of the castle, over the features of the awe-stricken governor, over the tear-filled eyes of the kneeling woman, and over the still form of Bernhard Bertelsköld, Count of Majniemi. His beautiful head, surrounded by its once black locks now silvered by time, was still the slumbering witness of a soul noble and sensitive, proud, brave, and heroic. He slept, as a past time slumbers in the sunshine of the new.

The sun which now shone into Åbo castle was the evening sun of the grand and eventful seventeenth century, alike gigantic in the spiritual and material world. Its night was felt to be near, when, after the setting of the star of Charles XI, two new and far more powerful and brilliant stars, one in the west, the other in the east, appeared above the horizon. The blue rim which Bertelsköld in vain sought in the icy sea, had now widened into a glittering fiord, where the waves played

free ;—and now it was spring everywhere in the spiritual realms, and the ice of superstition commenced to melt, and the eternally swelling billows of human thought freely began to seek the infinite beyond the shores of time.

Let us pause here, at the first view of spring. The disappearing snow must always remember that it melts before the sun of heaven ; the springing verdure must never forget that the snowdrifts protected its roots from the wintry frosts. May the old go out, may the new come in with love !

And so ends our story, one evening in spring. And God knows when the berries will ripen in the woods.

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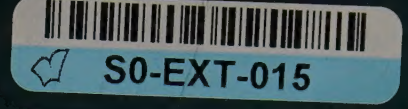
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